

2 Kings Chapter 18

Verses 18:1 – 25:21: With the fall of Samaria, the northern kingdom of Israel came to an end (17:5-6; 18:9-12). This last major division of the books of Kings narrates the events in the surviving southern kingdom of Judah (from 722 B.C. to its captivity and destruction in 586 B.C.). These chapters are dominated by the accounts of two good kings, Hezekiah (18:1 - 20:21), and Josiah (22:1 - 23:30). However, the reforms of these two godly kings did not reverse the effects of the two worst kings of Judah, Ahaz (16:1-20), and Manasseh (21:1-18). The result of Judah's apostasy was exile, just like it was for Israel (23:31 - 25:21). The books of Kings begin with the building of the temple (1 Kings 5:1 - 6:38), and end with its destruction (25:8-9; 13-17), chronicling the sad journey from the establishment of true worship to the destruction of apostasy.

In verses 1-8: Unlike those who preceded him, "Hezekiah" ("Yahweh Has Strengthened"), was a godly king who restored the Passover and returned the temple as a place of worship, pulled down the high palaces, and destroyed all Baal worship.

2 Kings 18:1 "Now it came to pass in the third year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, [that] Hezekiah the son of Ahaz king of Judah began to reign."

"Hezekiah" was the son of Ahaz and king of Judah (727-698 B.C.). He was utterly loyal to the Lord God of Israel (verses 3-6). That an ungodly man like Ahaz could have had such a godly son can be attributed only to the grace of God. Hezekiah's father had let the kingdom degenerate to idolatry; but on his ascension to the throne, Hezekiah decisively and courageously initiated religious reforms (verse 4; 2 Chron. 29:3-36; 30:1-27; 31:1). His reign occurred during the age of major Assyrian military and commercial activity in Phoenicia and the Philistine coast. Shalmaneser V conquered Samaria (in 722 B.C.), and Sargon founded a trading colony south of Gaza (in 716 B.C.). Hezekiah was a vassal of Assyria (until 705 B.C.), when he threw off their yoke. But he was no match for Sennacherib (in 701 B.C.), so God had to intervene through the "angel of the Lord," who killed 185,000 Assyrians in one night (verse 13; 19:34-35). During Hezekiah's reign Isaiah prophesied the coming Babylonian captivity (Isa. 39:6-7; 2 Kings 16:20; chapters 18-20; 2 Chron. chapters 29-32).

"Third year" (ca. 729 B.C.). Hoshea began to reign (in 732 B.C.; see notes on 15:27; 17:1). Hezekiah was co-regent with Ahaz to (715 B.C.; see note on 16:2; and notes on 2 Chron. 29:1-32:32). With this verse, the writer returned from his digression summarizing the causes of captivity to the historical record of the kings of the southern kingdom, Judah.

Hezekiah is called Ezekias, also. Ahaz was a wicked king, but Hezekiah will be a king that does right in the eyes of the LORD. He begins to reign in Judah, just before Israel goes into captivity. It is because of kings like Hezekiah, that Judah does not go into captivity as early as Israel does.

2 Kings 18:2 "Twenty and five years old was he when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty and nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also [was] Abi, the daughter of Zachariah."

“Twenty and nine years” (715 - 686 B.C.). He reigned by himself for 20 years (715 - 695 B.C.), and with his son, Manasseh, for 9 years (695 - 686 B.C.). The 29 years given here indicate only those years after his co-regency with Ahaz was over, when he was the actual sovereign. During Hezekiah’s reign, the prophets Isaiah (19:2; Isa. 1:1; 37:1), and Micah (Micah 1:1), continued to minister in Judah.

His reign was for a relatively long time. He would reign until he was 54 years old. Abi, the mother's name, is Abijah in other places. "Abi" means father. "Abijah" means Jehovah is my Father. We can see from the name that his mother was a believer in Jehovah. She possibly, was a good influence on her son. We are not sure what Zachariah this is.

2 Kings 18:3 "And he did [that which was] right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father did."

This is said without qualification of only three kings of Judah, Asa (1 Kings 15:11), Hezekiah, and Josiah (2 Kings 22:2). See some details of Hezekiah's acts at the commencement of his reign in (2 Chron. Chapter 29). It is thought that his reformation was preceded, and perhaps caused, by the prophecy of Micah recorded in (Jer. 26:18; Micah 3:12).

The only other two kings that this statement was made of, was Josiah and Asa. This is a very good statement. It is interesting, that all three of these kings had fathers, who did evil in the sight of the Lord.

2 Kings 18:4 "He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan."

“Removed the high places”: Hezekiah was the first king of Judah to totally eradicate the high places, i.e., the worship centers built contrary to the Mosaic law (Deut. 12:2-7, 13-14).

“Brake the images ... the groves”: Hezekiah destroyed the idols used in the worship of Baal and Asherah.

“The brazen serpent”: Hezekiah broke the Nehushtan into pieces i.e., the bronze snake made by Moses in the wilderness (see notes on Numbers 21:4-9). Because Judah had come to worship it as an idol, perhaps influenced by Canaanite religion, which regarded snakes as fertility symbols. It had remained a symbol of deliverance. However, it had become a source of spiritual confusion and idolatrous worship, possibly associated with the worship of Asherah. Therefore, it had to be destroyed.

The “bronze serpent” was a statue Moses erected to save the Israelites from deadly biting snakes (Num. 21:5-9). According to Jesus, it pictured how he would be lifted up on the cross (John 3:14-15). Over time, however, it had become an object of worship called the “Nehushtan (a word that sounds like the Hebrew words for both bronze and snake).

The very first thing that Hezekiah did, when he took office, was open the temple in Jerusalem back up for worship.

2 Chronicles 32:12 "Hath not the same Hezekiah taken away his high places and his altars, and commanded Judah and Jerusalem, saying, Ye shall worship before one altar, and burn incense upon it?"

We see that Hezekiah even stopped the worship in the high places, which had greatly troubled the LORD. It is interesting, that he would break the pole of the brazen serpent raised in the wilderness to stop death from the serpent bites. It appears, the people had begun to worship the brazen serpent on the rod. "Nehushtan" means brazen. Brass symbolically speaks of judgment.

Verses 5-8: "Clave to" means "cleaved to" or "remained close to" in loyalty and faithfulness. Hezekiah's faith enabled him to make unprecedented religious reforms in "Judah" and withstand Assyrian tyranny (19:32-36).

2 Kings 18:5 "He trusted in the LORD God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor [any] that were before him."

"He trusted in the LORD God of Israel": The noblest quality of Hezekiah (in dramatic contrast to his father, Ahaz) was that he relied on the Lord as his exclusive hope in every situation. What distinguished him from all other kings of Judah (after the division of the kingdom) was his firm trust in the Lord during a severe national crisis (18:17-19:34). Despite troublesome events, Hezekiah clung tightly to the lord, faithfully following Him and obeying His commands (verse 6). As a result, the Lord was with him and gave him success (verse 7).

Hezekiah is remembered for his great "trust in the Lord", much as Josiah would be remembered for his zeal for the law of the Lord (23:25). Hezekiah's great spiritual concern is well documented by the author of Chronicles, who catalogs extensively the great revival in his time (2 Chron. Chapters 29-31). Hezekiah had his trust in the only One you could trust, the LORD God of Israel. He was a complete change from the kings that went before him. Hezekiah was a great man of faith in the midst of a world gone mad. His faith excelled others. Even with the dire circumstances around him, he still had faith. He knew in his heart that God was his very present help.

2 Kings 18:6 "For he clave to the LORD, [and] departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, which the LORD commanded Moses."

To his worship and service; to the fear of the Lord, as the Targum.

"And departed not from following him": From his worship, as the same paraphrase.

"But kept his commandments, which the Lord commanded Moses": Both moral, ceremonial, and judicial.

This kind of faith and trust in the LORD brings blessings. Hezekiah kept the faith as long as he lived. He did not fall back into idolatry as others did. He stayed faithful to the LORD. He truly loved the LORD with a pure heart, and kept His commandments in spirit, as well as in deed. It was the desire of his heart to please God.

2 Kings 18:7 "And the LORD was with him; [and] he prospered whithersoever he went forth: and he rebelled against the king of Assyria, and served him not."

“He rebelled against . . . Assyria”: Before he became king, his father had submitted to Assyria. Courageously, Hezekiah broke that control by Assyria and asserted independence (Deut. 7).

Every Word that God had promised to do, He did. He had promised to mightily bless those who kept His commandments, and he did. He was with Hezekiah. God had promised to bless those who were faithful to keep His commandments, and spoke them through Moses, and then Joshua. The problem up until now, was that they had not kept the commandments. Hezekiah keeps them. He had no fear, because God was with him. He broke free from the Assyrian oppression. Everything Hezekiah attempted to do, God blessed.

2 Kings 18:8 "He smote the Philistines, [even] unto Gaza, and the borders thereof, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city."

“Gaza”: The southernmost city of the Philistines, located about 55 miles southwest of Jerusalem. Since Assyria had controlled Philistia, Hezekiah’s invasion defied Assyrian rule and brought the threat of retaliation.

The enemies of God were Hezekiah's enemies as well. He smote the enemies of the living God. Assyria had tried to take all of the countries around Israel, as well as Israel. They wanted to take Judah, but God was with Hezekiah, and they could not. Instead, Hezekiah defeated the Philistines.

Verses 9-12: These verses flash back to the time just before Israel’s destruction and captivity to give a summary of the fall of Samaria (more fully narrated in 17:5-23), as a graphic reminder of the Assyrian power and the threat they still were to Judah. This review sets the scene for the siege of Jerusalem with its reminder of Israel’s apostasy against which Hezekiah’s faith in the Lord was a bright contrast.

2 Kings 18:9 "And it came to pass in the fourth year of king Hezekiah, which [was] the seventh year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, [that] Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against Samaria, and besieged it."

In the beginning of it.

"Which was the seventh year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel": The beginning of his seventh.

"That Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against Samaria, and besieged it": (see 2 Kings 17:5).

Now the scene changes back to Israel. Israel's kings had been the opposite of Hezekiah. They had displeased God at every juncture. We know that this siege lasted two to three years.

2 Kings 18:10 "And at the end of three years they took it: [even] in the sixth year of Hezekiah, that [is] the ninth year of Hoshea king of Israel, Samaria was taken."

That is, at the first end of them, at the beginning, in which sense the phrase is taken in (Deut. 15:1). Even in the sixth year of Hezekiah, that is, the ninth year of Hoshea king of Israel, Samaria was taken (see 2 Kings 17:6).

We had discussed that Hoshea would be the last king to rule over the ten tribes as a nation. Israel goes into captivity to the Assyrians. They will be scattered, and not become a nation again. Some few will come back in the time of Ezra, but not as a nation.

2 Kings 18:11 "And the king of Assyria did carry away Israel unto Assyria, and put them in Halah and in Habor [by] the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes:"

Of the places he disposed of them in, after mentioned (see 2 Kings 17:6).

This is repeating an earlier verse. It drives home the message of the captivity and dispersing of Israel into many nations and cities.

2 Kings 18:12 "Because they obeyed not the voice of the LORD their God, but transgressed his covenant, [and] all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded, and would not hear [them], nor do [them]."

In his law, and by his prophets.

"But transgressed his covenant, and all that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded": Which evils are at large insisted on in the preceding chapter as the cause of their captivity.

"And would not hear them, nor do them": Contrary to the agreement of their fathers at Sinai, who promised to do both (Exodus 24:3).

This is showing the contrast between the disobedience to the commandments of God, to Hezekiah keeping the commandments. Israel's problems were brought upon themselves, because they disobeyed the commandments of God. They had been warned over and over what would happen if they became unfaithful and followed other gods. Now, they are paying for their sins.

Verses 18:13-20:19: This narrative, with a few omissions and additions, is found (in Isaiah 36:1 – 39:8; see Isaiah notes for amplification).

Verses 18:13 – 19:13: First, “Sennacherib” took the “fortified cities” of Judah, then he threatened Jerusalem”. “Tartan” (“Field Marshal” or “commander in Chief”), was the Assyrian general in command. “Rab-saris” (“Chief Eunuch”), refers to a senior military officer. “Rab-shakeh “Chief Cupbearer”), was a high court official often in charge of administrative affairs (Isa. Chapters 36-37).

2 Kings 18:13 "Now in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah did Sennacherib king of Assyria come up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and took them."

“Fourteenth year”: 701 B.C., Hezekiah began his sole rule (in 715 B.C.; see notes on 18:1-2). This date for the siege of Jerusalem is confirmed in Assyrian sources.

The Assyrian king “Sennacherib” launched his third campaign in the year 701 B.C. His annals report that it was directed at the western countries and against “Hezekiah” in particular. Hezekiah had joined with the Phoenicians, the Philistines of Ekron, and Egypt in alliance against the Assyrian king.

“Sennacherib”: He succeeded Sargon II as king of Assyria (in 705 B.C. and ruled until 681 B.C.). Hezekiah had rebelled against him (verse 7), probably by withholding tribute when he invaded Philistia.

“Fenced cities” (see note on Isa. 36:1).

It appears from this that many of the fenced cities of Judah did fall to the Assyrians. Sennacherib was the king of Assyria at the time. Jerusalem did not fall.

Verses 14-16: Hezekiah sought to rectify the situation with Sennacherib by admitting his error in rebelling and paying the tribute the Assyrian king demanded. Sennacherib asked for about 11 tons of silver and one ton of gold. To pay, Hezekiah emptied the temple and palace treasuries and stripped the layers of gold off the doors and doorposts of the temple.

2 Kings 18:14 "And Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria to Lachish, saying, I have offended; return from me: that which thou puttest on me will I bear. And the king of Assyria appointed unto Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold."

The siege of “Lachish” and Hezekiah’s payment of tribute are confirmed by inscriptions from Sennacherib’s palace at Nineveh.

Lachish was an important ancient Canaanite and Israelite walled city in the lowlands of Judah. The city was situated about 30 miles southwest of Jerusalem and 15 miles west of Hebron. Initially, it was captured by Joshua and the Israelites (Joshua 10:1-32). During the time of Hezekiah (701 B.C.), Sennacherib, king of Assyria, attacked and conquered Lachish along with 46 of King Hezekiah’s fortified cities (verses 13-17; 2 Chron. 32:9). Its capture was so important

to Sennacherib that he memorialized it in a magnificent relief on the wall of his palace at Nineveh. About a hundred years later, Lachish was again a strong hold in the nation of Judah. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, attacked and defeated the city when he took Judah into captivity (in 586 B.C.; Jer. 34:7). Important information concerning events when Nebuchadnezzar was approaching Jerusalem (in 586 B.C.), has come from a series of broken bits of pottery known as the Lachish Letters. The city was inhabited again when the Jews returned from their years of captivity in Babylon (Neh. 11:30).

We see that Hezekiah realizes that the Assyrians have a powerful army, with battering rams and other war material, sufficient to take the city. Hezekiah sends the king of Assyria word that he will pay whatever tribute is levied, but he wants the Assyrian king to leave Judah. A talent weighs 125 pounds. The silver he required of Hezekiah was 37,500 pounds and 3,750 pounds of gold.

Verses 15-17: Hezekiah's large payment probably convinced Sennacherib that there must be much more treasure at "Jerusalem." Therefore, he put the city under siege until his present campaigning at Lachish would allow him to bring his full army up to Jerusalem. Hezekiah's further preparations for a siege are detailed (in 2 Chron. 32:3-8).

2 Kings 18:15 "And Hezekiah gave [him] all the silver that was found in the house of the LORD, and in the treasures of the king's house."

To make up the three hundred talents of silver, for which purpose he exhausted both, which had been done more than once before by the kings of Judah. These were their resources in times of distress (see 2 Kings 12:18).

Ahaz had taken all of the silver and gold 30 years earlier, but God had blessed them.

2 Kings 18:16 "At that time did Hezekiah cut off [the gold from] the doors of the temple of the LORD, and [from] the pillars which Hezekiah king of Judah had overlaid, and gave it to the king of Assyria."

The plates of gold with which they were covered; or scraped off the gold from them, as the Targum interprets it.

"And from the pillars which Hezekiah king of Judah had overlaid": Or the posts, as the Targum. The lintel or side posts of the doors of the temple; which though covered in Solomon's time, the gold was worn off, or had been taken off by Ahaz, but was renewed by Hezekiah. And who, in this time of distress, thought he might take it off again, no doubt with a full purpose to replace it, when he should be able. This is one of the three things the Talmudic writers disapprove of in Hezekiah.

"And gave it to the king of Assyria": To make up the thirty talents of gold he demanded.

Hezekiah had been blessed of God, and Hezekiah had tried to restore the temple to its greatness. He had even covered the pillars and doors with gold. Now there is an emergency, and he will use it to save Jerusalem. The Assyrian had asked for so much gold and silver, he would have to deplete the land to have enough to pay them.

Verses 17-24: The tribute did not satisfy Sennacherib, who sent messengers to demand Hezekiah's complete surrender.

2 Kings 18:17 "And the king of Assyria sent Tartan and Rab-saris and Rab-shakeh from Lachish to king Hezekiah with a great host against Jerusalem. And they went up and came to Jerusalem. And when they were come up, they came and stood by the conduit of the upper pool, which [is] in the highway of the fuller's field."

"Tartan": General of the Assyrian army (Isa. 20:1).

"Rab-saris": A high official in the palace. A chief officer; literally a eunuch.

"Rab-shakeh": The word is not a proper noun, but means "commander." He was the spokesman for Sennacherib, who represented the king against Jerusalem on this occasion.

"Lachish" (see note on 14:19). Sennacherib's conquest of this city was in its closing phase when he sent the messengers.

"Great host": This was a token force of the main army (19:35), with which Sennacherib hoped to bluff Judah into submitting.

"Conduit of the upper pool": Isaiah had met Ahaz at the same spot to try, unsuccessfully, to dissuade him from trusting in foreign powers (Isa. 7:3). It was probably located on the higher ground northwest of Jerusalem on the main north-south highway between Judah and Samaria.

"Fuller's": The word means "launderer" and indicates the field where such activity was done, being near the water supply.

It appears, that Sennacherib had returned home with his captives, that he had taken from the cities he overran. He thinks Judah will be such an easy mark, that he can send his subordinates to take care of them. Tartan was commander in chief. Rab-saris was chief eunuch. Rab-shakeh was chief cup-bearer. This field was in the direction of Lachish from Jerusalem. It appears, they had brought a message to Hezekiah.

2 Kings 18:18 "And when they had called to the king, there came out to them Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, which [was] over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph the recorder."

“Eliakim ... Shebna”: Eliakim was the palace administrator and Shebna, the secretary (see notes on Isa 22:19-22).

“Joah ..., the recorder”: The position was that of an intermediary between the king and the people (2 Sam. 8:16).

“Shebna, the scribe” and royal chamberlain, would later be replaced by “Eliakim” (compare Isa.22:15-25).

Hezekiah did not personally go out to meet them, but sent three of his men of high esteem in his court to meet with them. Eliakim had taken the place of Shebna as head of the household. Shebna was qualified to draw up official documents. Asaph kept the records for the king.

Verses 19-35: Sennacherib was uncertain whether Hezekiah’s trust was in “Egypt” or the “Lord,” but he believed that Hezekiah was guilty of deceiving his people if he convinced them to rely on either one rather than surrendering to him. As Sennacherib correctly pointed out, no other nation’s “gods” had delivered” them from the Assyrians. But Hezekiah knew that those gods were not the Holy One of Israel (19:22).

Verses 19-25: The Rab-shakeh’s logic was twofold:

- (1) Egypt would be unable to deliver Jerusalem (verses 20-21, 23-24); and
- (2) The Lord had called on the Assyrians to destroy Judah (verses 22, 25).

Verses 19-20: “What confidence is this wherein thou trustest ... on whom dost thou trust?” The enemy, and the world, are always watching God’s people to see if their singular answer to these questions holds up under attack, or whether it is “vain words” (Psalms 118:8-9). In the end, Sennacherib’s threats were empty words (19:6-7).

2 Kings 18:19 "And Rab-shakeh said unto them, Speak ye now to Hezekiah, Thus saith the great king, the king of Assyria, What confidence [is] this wherein thou trustest?"

The “Rab-shakeh” begins bit of psychological warfare to undermine the spirit of resistance in Jerusalem (verses 26-27). This tactic was often practiced by Assyrian besiegers.

“Great king”: Compare verse 28. The self-appropriated title of Assyrian kings. In contrast, Rab-shakeh rudely omitted any title for Hezekiah (verse 19:22, 29-32). The term “Great king” was traditionally reserved for leaders of super powers in the ancient Near East.

Rab-shakeh, third in command in this, is very insulting; speaking of Hezekiah without his title. He was possibly trying to say with this, that he would not be king long. We can assume from this that Hezekiah had rebelled against the Assyrians.

2 Kings 18:20 "Thou sayest, (but [they are but] vain words,) [I have] counsel and strength for the war. Now on whom dost thou trust, that thou rebellest against me?"

“Vain words” (see note on Isa. 36:5).

“On whom dost thou trust ... ?”: The implication was that Assyria was so strong, there was none stronger.

The king of Assyria is assuming that Hezekiah had sent for help from Egypt. He did not know that Hezekiah was speaking of the strength of the LORD. Hezekiah would welcome help from Egypt, but if he did not get it, he knew he could depend upon the LORD. The message the king of Assyria had sent, was an insulting message. He said that Hezekiah was talking big, but could not carry through.

2 Kings 18:21 "Now, behold, thou trustest upon the staff of this bruised reed, [even] upon Egypt, on which if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so [is] Pharaoh king of Egypt unto all that trust on him."

“Bruised reed ... Egypt”: The Assyrian’s advice strongly resembled that of Isaiah (Isa. 19:14-16; 30:7; 31:3). Egypt was not strong and could not be counted on for help. The “Rab-shakeh’s evaluation of a then weak “Egypt” was shared by Isaiah (Isa. Chapter 20; 30:3-5; 31:1-3).

2 Kings 18:22 "But if ye say unto me, We trust in the LORD our God: [is] not that he, whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away, and hath said to Judah and Jerusalem, Ye shall worship before this altar in Jerusalem?"

“He, whose high places and whose altars”: The Rab-shakeh mistakenly thought Hezekiah’s reforms in removing idols from all over the land and reestablishing central worship in Jerusalem (18:4; 2 Chron. 31:1), had removed opportunities to worship the Lord, and thus cut back on honoring Judah’s God, thereby displeasing Him and forfeiting His help in war.

“This altar”: That all worship should center in Solomon’s temple was utterly foreign to the polytheistic Assyrians.

Sennacherib is telling Hezekiah, that to depend on Egypt, is depending on someone who could not even defend themselves, much less Judah. He also says that Judah's God would be angry with Hezekiah for breaking down the high places and altars, except the temple. The king of Assyria is in for a surprise. Hezekiah's God is pleased with him, not angry.

Verses 18:23-24 (see note on Isaiah 36:8-9).

2 Kings 18:23 "Now therefore, I pray thee, give pledges to my lord the king of Assyria, and I will deliver thee two thousand horses, if thou be able on thy part to set riders upon them."

That is, give hostages to ensure thy future obedience and subjection.

“And I will deliver thee two thousand horses”: There is so little likelihood of thy being able to withstand the power of my master, who has thousands of chariots and horses, that I challenge thee to produce two thousand skillful horsemen that know how to manage horses. And I will give thee two thousand horses for them.

How then wilt thou turn away the face of one captain. How wilt thou force him to turn his back to thee, and flee away from thee?

These men are saying that Hezekiah would not have 2,000 men to fight, even if they had the horses. Assyria would furnish the horses, if Hezekiah furnished the men.

2 Kings 18:24 "How then wilt thou turn away the face of one captain of the least of my master's servants, and put thy trust on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen?"

The connection of thought is: (But thou canst not); and how.

"Turn away the face of": I.e., repulse, reject the demand of (1Kings 2:16.)

“One captain of the least of my master’s servants”: Rather, a pasha who is one of the smallest of my lord’s servants. He means himself. The word we render “pasha” is, in the Hebrew, pa’hath, a word which used to be derived from the Persian, but which is now known to be Semitic. From the corresponding Assyrian words pahat, “prefect,” “provincial governor,” and pihat, “prefecture.”

And put thy trust”: Rather, but thou hast put thy trust; assigning a ground for Hezekiah’s folly. There should be a stop at “servants.” (Compare Isa. 31:1).

“Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots.”

2 Kings 18:25 "Am I now come up without the LORD against this place to destroy it? The LORD said to me, Go up against this land, and destroy it."

Did Hezekiah trust in “the Lord” (compare verse 22)? The Rab-shakeh claims that God had sent Sennacherib to Jerusalem to judge it!

“The Lord said” (see note on Isaiah 36:10).

The Assyrian says, it is a vain hope to expect Egypt to help them. This Assyrian is trying to say, that his false god is the LORD. He says this false god, Asshur, had told them to come against Judah. Sennacherib claims that the LORD sent him against Judah. He does not even know the LORD, or recognize Him as God.

2 Kings 18:26 "Then said Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, and Shebna, and Joah, unto Rab-shakeh, Speak, I pray thee, to thy servants in the Syrian language; for we understand [it]: and talk not with us in the Jews' language in the ears of the people that [are] on the wall."

The Aramaic (Syrian) "language" was the language of international diplomacy at this time.

"Syrian ... Jews" (see note on Isaiah 36:11).

Rab-shakeh had tried to show his superiority, by speaking in the Hebrew language. Besides making him feel important, he thought he might influence the people standing around to surrender. Now, we see the three men that Hezekiah sent, show that they are educated men. They tell him to speak in his own language, and they will understand. They tell him, that the negotiations are not for the ears of the people.

2 Kings 18:27 "But Rab-shakeh said unto them, Hath my master sent me to thy master, and to thee, to speak these words? [hath he] not [sent me] to the men which sit on the wall, that they may eat their own dung, and drink their own piss with you?"

"Men ... on the wall" (see note on Isaiah 36:12).

This is a threat to the people who are listening, so they might influence Hezekiah to give up.

Verses 28-36: "The Rab-shakeh" urges the "people" of Jerusalem to find peace and prosperity by surrendering to Sennacherib.

Verses 28-32: The Rab-shakeh spoke longer and louder in Hebrew suggesting that Hezekiah could not save the city, but the great king, of Assyria, would fill the people with abundance if they would promise to surrender to his sovereign control, give tribute to him and be willing to go into a rich and beneficial exile (verse 31-32).

2 Kings 18:28 "Then Rab-shakeh stood and cried with a loud voice in the Jews' language, and spake, saying, Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria:"

Rab-shakeh had probably been sitting before. He now stood up to attract attention, and raised his voice to be the better heard. Still speaking Hebrew, and not Aramaic, he addressed himself directly to the people on the wall, soldiers and others, doing the very opposite to what he had been requested to do, and outraging all propriety. History scarcely presents any other instance of such coarse and barefaced effrontery, unless the affronts put upon a Danubian principality by the envoy of a "great Power" may be regarded as constituting a parallel.

"Hear the word of the great king, the King of Assyria": It is scarcely likely that Sennacherib had anticipated his envoy's action, much less directed it, and told him exactly what he was to say. But Rab-shakeh thinks his words will have more effect if he represents them as those of his master.

2 Kings 18:29 "Thus saith the king, Let not Hezekiah deceive you: for he shall not be able to deliver you out of his hand:"

Rab-shakeh and his master, no doubt, both of them thought Hezekiah's grounds of confidence would prove fallacious, and that all who should trust in them would find themselves "deceived." There were but two grounds that Hezekiah could possibly put forward: Deliverance by human means, by his own armed strength and that of his allies. Or by deliverance by supernatural means. By some great manifestation of miraculous power on the part of Jehovah. Rab-shakeh thinks both equally impossible. The first however, is too absurd for argument, and he therefore takes no further notice of it; but the second he proceeds to combat (in verses 33-35).

"For he shall not be able to deliver you out of his hand": Correct grammar requires "out of my hand;" but Rab-shakeh forgets that he is professing to report the words of Sennacherib.

Notice, he is doing the opposite of what he was asked to do. He still speaks in Hebrew, so all the people can understand him. He speaks loudly, so they will be able to hear. He elevates Sennacherib to great king, while not even calling Hezekiah king. This is an extremely insulting thing to do. He is doing his best, to get the people to turn against Hezekiah.

2 Kings 18:30 "Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, The LORD will surely deliver us, and this city shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria."

Hezekiah cannot save you himself (2 Kings 18:29). Jehovah will not do so (2 Kings 18:25). The "Jewish coloring" of the verse is not apparent to the present writer. If Rab-shakeh could speak Hebrew, he would almost certainly know the name of the god of the Jews. And it was perfectly natural for him to assume that Hezekiah and his prophets would encourage the people to trust in the God who had His sanctuary on Zion, and was bound to defend His own dwelling place. The words are not so exact a reproduction of Isaiah's language (Isaiah 37:35), as to preclude this view.

Now, he is insulting God. This Assyrian possibly, had heard that Hezekiah had been encouraging his people to trust in the LORD.

2 Kings 18:31 "Hearken not to Hezekiah: for thus saith the king of Assyria, Make [an agreement] with me by a present, and come out to me, and [then] eat ye every man of his own vine, and every one of his fig tree, and drink ye every one the waters of his cistern:"

Literally, make with me a blessing, i.e. (according to the Targum and Syriac), "make peace with me." The phrase does not elsewhere occur. Perhaps it is grounded on the fact that the conclusion of peace was generally accompanied by mutual expressions of goodwill.

"Come out to me": From behind your walls; surrender (1Sam. 11:3; Jer. 21:9).

"And then eat ye": The country-folk who had taken refuge in Jerusalem are invited to return to their farms, and dwell in peace, "until Sennacherib has brought his Egyptian campaign to a close. Then, no doubt, they will be removed from their home, but a new home will be given them equal

to the old". We might, however, render, according to a well-known Hebrew idiom, so shall ye eat, every man of his own vine, etc. I.e., if ye surrender at once, no harm shall befall you; but ye shall enjoy your own land, until I remove you to a better (compare 1 Kings 5:5.) Thenius denies the reference to the Egyptian campaign, and makes Sennacherib pose as a father who wishes to make the necessary preparations for the reception of his dear children.

Verses 32-35 (see note on Isaiah 36:18-20).

2 Kings 18:32 "Until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of oil olive and of honey, that ye may live, and not die: and hearken not unto Hezekiah, when he persuadeth you, saying, The LORD will deliver us."

"Take you away" (see note on Isaiah 36:17).

All of this is to get these people to voluntarily go into captivity to Assyria. He does not tell them, that they will be in bondage to Assyria. Assyria may have some of these things, that are mentioned here, but they would not belong to these Hebrews, if they give up their freedom to Assyria. Who would want to trade their freedom for a few material things anyway?

2 Kings 18:33 "Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered at all his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria?"

Literally, have the gods of the nations at all delivered everyone his own Land? If this is to be consistent with (2 Kings 18:25), we must suppose the thought to be that the god of each conquered nation had favored the Assyrian cause, as Jehovah is here alleged to be doing. But, as (2 Kings 18:34-35), seem to imply the impotence of the foreign deities when opposed to the might of Assyria, a verbal inconsistency may be admitted (see 2 Chron. 32:15).

The Rab-shakeh would hardly be very particular about what he said in an extemporized address, the sole aim of which was to work on the fears of the Jews. The connection of thought in his mind may have been somewhat as follows: "Jehovah, instead of opposing, manifestly favors our arms; and even if that be otherwise, as you may believe, no matter! He is not likely to prove mightier than the gods of all the other nations that have fallen before us."

2 Kings 18:34 "Where [are] the gods of Hamath, and of Arpad? where [are] the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah? have they delivered Samaria out of mine hand?"

Arpad was situated somewhere in southern Syria; but it is impossible to fix its exact position. Sargon mentions it in an inscription as joining with Hamath in an act of rebellion, which he chastised. It was probably the capture and destruction of these two cities on this occasion which caused them to be mentioned together here (and in 2 Kings 19:13, and again in Isaiah 10:9). Sennacherib adduces late examples of the inability of the nations' gods to protect their cities.

A good Hebrew would be able to quickly see, the people mentioned had worshipped false gods. They had not depended on the LORD. The Hebrew God is the LORD. He is the only True God. Those false gods had no power, but the LORD is all powerful.

2 Kings 18:35 "Who [are] they among all the gods of the countries, that have delivered their country out of mine hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem out of mine hand?"

Which I have myself conquered. The countries with which Assyria had been at war.

"That have delivered their country out of mine hand": That the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of mine hand? Produce an example of deliverance. Rab-shakeh means to say, "before you speak of deliverance as probable, or even possible. If you cannot, relinquish the hope, and submit yourselves." Rab-shakeh cannot conceive the idea that Jehovah is anything but a local god, on a par with all the other gods of the countries.

To compare the LORD to these false gods, is abominable. This Assyrian sees no difference in the LORD and all of the local false gods of these other countries.

2 Kings 18:36 "But the people held their peace, and answered him not a word: for the king's commandment was, saying, Answer him not."

"Held their peace" (see note on Isaiah 36:21).

Rab-shakeh's words of warning were not heeded by the people of Israel. If they had thoughts of rebelling against Hezekiah, they are not mentioned. A true Hebrew would understand that the LORD was not like these local false gods, which had no power. They would have their faith and trust in Hezekiah, because he was on the side of the LORD. Hezekiah had said not to answer these men of Assyria, and they did not answer.

2 Kings 18:37 "Then came Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, which [was] over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph the recorder, to Hezekiah with [their] clothes rent, and told him the words of Rab-shakeh."

"Clothes rent": The torn "clothes" of Hezekiah's three men was a sign of grief, humiliation, and sorrow (19:4).

See note on Isaiah 36:22.

These three men that Hezekiah had sent to represent Judah in front of the three men from Assyria, would not be tearing their clothes for fear of the threats that were made. They were tearing their clothes, because these men of Assyria had compared the LORD with the false gods around them. These men, along with Hezekiah, were offended for their LORD. They knew that the LORD was perfectly capable of saving them and destroying Assyria.

2 Kings Chapter 18 Questions

1. What is another name for Hezekiah?
2. What does "Hezekiah" mean?
3. What kind of king was he?
4. How old was he, when he began to reign?
5. How many years did he reign?
6. What was his mother's name?
7. What is another name for her?
8. What does "Abi" mean?
9. What does "Abijah" mean?
10. Who, possibly, influenced Hezekiah to love the LORD?
11. His love for the LORD is compared to whose in verse 3?
12. Who were two other kings, who had the same thing said about them?
13. What kind of fathers did all three of these kings have?
14. What was the first thing Hezekiah did, when he took office as king?
15. What does verse 4 tell us he did, to stop the false worship?
16. What was named Nehushtan?
17. What does "Nehushtan" mean?
18. How was Hezekiah compared to the other kings?
19. What good is said about Hezekiah in verse 6?
20. Because of what Hezekiah did, what did the LORD do for him?
21. Who were Hezekiah's enemies?
22. What had happened to Samaria?
23. What caused Israel to go into captivity?
24. What king came against the fenced cities of Jerusalem?

25. What did Hezekiah give them to save Jerusalem?
26. Who did the king of Assyria send with a message for Hezekiah?
27. Who did Hezekiah send to receive the message?
28. Who talked for the Assyrians?
29. How did he insult Hezekiah, by what he called him?
30. Who did he tell Hezekiah not to depend on for help?
31. Who did the Assyrian try to turn against Hezekiah?
32. What effect did the message have on the three men that Hezekiah sent to receive it?