

Chapter VII

Supportive Arguments for Two Invasions

*Part V of the Sabbath and Jubilee
of 701/700 and 700/699 B.C.E.*

There are a number of other issues brought up by the advocates of the two-invasion hypothesis which are used to support their view. These arguments, nevertheless, are heavily flawed. They reflect a bias against Scriptures and secondary sources while unduly emphasizing what is falsely perceived as a conflict between these writings and the Assyrian inscriptions. As we shall demonstrate, the ancient sources are all in harmony. The only conflict that exists lies between the interpretations of those insisting on two invasions against Judah and all of these ancient accounts.

Arab Campaign

The best that the advocates for the two-invasion hypothesis can put forth as support for the “possibility” of a second attack on Judah is the mentioning of an Arab expedition undertaken by Sennacherib sometime during or after his eighth campaign (the exact date being unknown).¹ This record reports how Sennacherib (or one of his generals) went against Queen Telhunu and King Hazael of the Arabs and conquered a region located “in the midst of the desert.”²

There are two cities named (one now lost in a lacuna): i.e., “. . . [and] Adummatu, which are situated in the desert.”³ The location of the city of Adummatu is unknown;⁴ but Arabia, during the Assyrian period, consisted of

1 AUSS, 4.1, p. 25; JTEH, p. 171; BS, 63, pp. 609f.

2 AS, p. 92, *l.* 22.

3 AS, p. 93, *l.* 26.

4 The identity of Adummatu is still a mystery. Yet because it is also called Adumu by Esarhaddon (ARAB, 2, §536), some have attempted to equate Adummatu with Edom, located on Judah’s southeast border (e.g., CAH, 3, pp. 74f). This identification, nevertheless, fails on several counts. First, Edom was the name of a country not a city. Second, Edom was not an Arab country. The Arabs did not inhabit old Edomite lands until the 5th century B.C.E. (Strabo, 16:1:34). Third, the country of Edom is separately listed by both Sennacherib (AS, p. 30, 2:57) and Esarhaddon (ARAB, 2, §690) under the spelling *U-du-um-ma-ai*, which is substantially dissimilar from Adummatu (*A-du-um-ma-tu*). Fourth, Edom was located in the mountains, not the desert.

The attempt to identify the Arab city of Adummatu with a place near Palestine is a direct outgrowth of the desire to reframe the evidence to fit the hypothesis. The Assyrian records clearly point out that Adummatu was an Arab city located in the desert. They associate their victory in this district with the Assyrian campaigns in and around Babylonia. The identification of Adummatu (Adumu) with Dumat al-Ghandal (modern el-Jawf) is a better possibility (EBD, p. 295; HBD, p. 229; NBD, p. 328). It is located halfway between the head of the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Aqabah, and along a road to Babylon (Map 2). Dumat (Adumu, Adummatu) may be a form of the name Dumah (a son of Ishmael, father of the Arab tribes; cf. Gen., 25:14, 1 Chron., 1:30). Yet even this is speculation. Ancient Adummatu may be another place entirely and, if so, located much closer to the Babylonian region. But if Adummatu can be identified as Dumat, it can easily be attacked from the east by taking the road from Babylon going to Dumat.

that broad land located between Babylonia on the east and Syria and the Trans-Jordan on the west.⁵ Therefore, the reasoning goes, a possibility exists that, as part of this Arab campaign, Sennacherib led an expedition against Judah and Egypt.

A closer look at this information demonstrates just how inadequate this explanation is. To begin with, Sennacherib had difficulties with Arab tribes located in the Babylonian region, along with the Aramaeans and the Chaldaeans of that area.⁶ Sennacherib's records, therefore, testify to the fact that many Arabs bordering on the districts of Babylonia had resettled in several Babylonian cities. This proves that the Arabs positioned in northeastern Arabia served as a source of difficulty for the Assyrians, not those near Judah on the west or southwest side of his empire.

Second, Esarhaddon, the son of Sennacherib, while referring back to his father's campaign against these Arabs, writes that the Arab king named Hazael had likewise submitted to him.⁷ He places his own victory over these Arabs after his conquest of Bit-Dakkuri in Chaldaea, Babylonia.⁸ Esarhaddon follows with the conquest of Bazu, a district located in a desert region of sand,⁹ the submission of the king of the city of Iadi' in the Bazu district,¹⁰ and the conquest of the land of Gambuli, which lay on the border of Elam.¹¹ Among these victories he also recalls the submission of several Median states.¹²

These lists associate the conquest of Adummatu in Arabia with the districts near Babylonia and the East, not in the West. There is no evidence whatsoever that indicates that Sennacherib was anywhere near Syria and Judaea, let alone Egypt, when he invaded (or made a raid into) Arabia. In fact, when Sennacherib mentions his defeat of Telhunu and Hazael, he places it in conjunction with his war against the Babylonians and Elamites.¹³ The context of the inscription itself points to the fact that Sennacherib's defeat of some of the Arabs was directly related to his eighth campaign and was part of his march against the regions of Babylonia. It is highly probable, therefore, that these Arabs lived in northeast or north central Arabia, in the desert south of the Euphrates River, just to the west of Babylonia (see Map 2).

⁵ The Assyrians listed the Arabian lands separately from the Akkadian, Chaldaean and other Babylonian countries, and separately from the Khatti-Aram (Phoenicia-Syria) and Trans-Jordan countries (Ammon, Moab, and Edom). The Assyrians, themselves, held Mesopotamia during the time of Sennacherib. This data places the Arab countries south of the Euphrates River, east of Syria and the Trans-Jordan, and west of the Babylonian countries. The sons of Ishmael, who formed the Arab tribes, are said by Josephus to have inhabited the country "extending from the Euphrates to the Red Sea and called it Nabatene; and it is these who conferred their names on the Arabian nation and its tribes in honour both of their own prowess and of the fame of Abraham" (Jos., *Antiq.*, 1:12:4).

⁶ AS, pp. 24f, 1:18–41, pp. 50f, l. 22–30; pp. 53f, l. 34–52, pp. 56f, l. 6–15.

⁷ ARAB, 2, §§518a, 536.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 2, §§517–518a.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 2, §§520, 537.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 2, §§520, 538.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 2, §§539.

¹² *Ibid.*, 2, §§519, 542.

¹³ AS, pp. 89–93.

The advocates of a second invasion are forced to admit that their coupling of this thrust against some of the Arabs with a major campaign against Judah and Egypt is only inferred by an “allusion” and that it is “not conclusive.”¹⁴ The self-deception involved in this interpretation is revealed in Kemper Fullerton’s conclusion, when he wrote:

It must be admitted that these casual monumental allusions are to an Arabian expedition, not to a Palestinian expedition, but it certainly cannot be considered “*kühne Phantasie*” to bring the two into connection.¹⁵

Yet based solely upon the evidence, the use of this Arab campaign of Sennacherib as support for a second invasion against Judah has no historical merit. There is no connection whatsoever between this event and a campaign against Palestine or Egypt. To make such a connection merely because it suits the purpose of a hypothesis is unsound. The hard fact is that Sennacherib’s Arab campaign is associated with the Babylonian regions and not with Syria or Palestine. Rather than giving hope that there was a second campaign towards Egypt and the West, this record is but further confirmation that, after his humiliation in Judah during his third campaign, Sennacherib only involved himself with issues closer to home and in the East.

Herodotus

Herodotus, 2:141, is cited as support for the argument, mentioned above, associating the “Arab campaign” of Sennacherib with an Egyptian expedition.¹⁶ In Herodotus’ version, King Sennacherib is said to have moved against Egypt with a “great host of Arabians and Assyrians,” also called a “host from Arabia.”¹⁷ It is reasoned, therefore, that if the attack on Palestine and Egypt was an outgrowth of the Arabian campaign such might explain Herodotus’ unusual definition.¹⁸

First, there is no justification for the idea that because Sennacherib conquered two Arab cities that he would subsequently lead an army as king of the Arabs in an attack upon the joint Egyptian and Ethiopian Empire. Sennacherib was king of Assyria and Babylonia, but he was never referred to as the king of Arabia.¹⁹ Second, when Berosus, the Chaldaean historian, speaks of this war,

¹⁴ E.g., JTEH, p. 171.

¹⁵ BS, 63, p. 610. *Kühne Phantasie* means “bold imagination.”

¹⁶ BS, 63, pp. 610, 632f, n. 114; AUSS, 4.1, pp. 24f, n. 65; JTEH, p. 171.

¹⁷ Josephus remarks that Herodotus was in error by referring to Sennacherib as “king of the Arabs instead of king of the Assyrians” (Jos., *Antiq.*, 10:1:4). His statement shows that he saw no connection with an Arab army. But Herodotus was speaking from a Greek and Egyptian definition of his own day. It was geographical not ethnic.

¹⁸ SIP, p. 25. This idea was first suggested by H. Winckler (Altt. Unter., p. 38).

¹⁹ That Sennacherib was king of Babylon, see CAW, p. 43. According to the Babylonian King List A, Sennacherib ruled as king of Babylon for his first 2 years and his last 8 years. Between these two times he had appointed Belibni to be king under him, and after Belibni he placed his own son, Assur-nadin-shumi, on the throne of Babylon. The latter was killed after a reign of 6 years (CAW, p. 43).

he states that Sennacherib “made an expedition against all Asia and Egypt.”²⁰ Nothing is said of Arabia.

Third, this framing of the words of Herodotus and his sources shows no regard for the age in which Herodotus lived (5th century B.C.E.). When seen from the eyes of a Greek or Egyptian contemporary of Herodotus, his statement about the Assyrian army was correct, regardless of any Arab campaign. The regional name “Assyria,” during the 5th century B.C.E. and after, included not only Assyria proper but Babylonia and Mesopotamia.²¹ Herodotus himself labeled the entire region of Mesopotamia, Assyria east of the Tigris River, and the Babylonian region under the single designation “Assyria.”²² Mesopotamia, for example, was held by the Assyrians during Sennacherib’s day, the city of Harran being a major Assyrian stronghold.²³ Pliny writes, “The whole of Mesopotamia once belonged to the Assyrians, and the population was scattered in villages, with the exception of Babylon and Nineveh,” and refers to “the prefecture of Mesopotamia, which derives its origin from the Assyrians.”²⁴

In Herodotus’ day, meanwhile, much of the land formerly possessed by the Assyrians (who properly held both sides of the Tigris River north of Babylonia) had been resettled by Arabs. On the east bank was the country of “Adiabene, which was previously called Assyria.”²⁵ On the Mesopotamian side of the river lived the Arabs called Orroei, and next to them, in the interior, the Arabian tribes called the Eldamari and then the Salmani.²⁶ After the collapse of the Assyrian and then Babylonian Empires, much of these territories were repopulated with Arabs (from whom a great number of the modern-day Arab tribes of Iraq descend). What had previously been the land of the Assyrians was in the minds of many during the days of Herodotus (mid-5th century B.C.E.) now considered to be Arab territory. As with numerous other civilizations, the names of the more recent populations have been anachronistically applied to earlier ones. Validating this connection, Herodotus also speaks of this host from Arabia, which Sennacherib led, as the “Assyrian camp” at Pelusium.²⁷

Sennacherib came against Judah and Egypt after re-establishing Assyrian control over Babylon in 702 B.C.E. As a result, it was quite appropriate for the

²⁰ Quoted in Jos., *Antiq.*, 10:1:4.

²¹ Strabo, 16:1:1; Pliny, 6:30.

²² Herodotus, 1:95, 102, 106, 178, 184, 188f, 192–194, 4:87. Assyria represented the ninth Persian province, separate from the Armenian thirteenth province and separate from Syria, Arabia, Palestine, Phoenicia, and Cyprus, which make up the fifth province (Herodotus, 3:91–93, cf. 2: 8, 11, 12, 15, 19, 116, 159, 3:5–6, 7:60–81). The Arabians, as Strabo notes, properly held the region opposite the Euphrates River and the Assyrian country (Strabo, 16:1:1). That the Assyria of Herodotus also included Mesopotamia, also see HH, 1, p. 122, n. 4; Godley, *Her.*, ii, map of the Persian Empire located in the back of the volume.

²³ From the time of King Sargon until the end of the Assyrian Empire, Harran was an Assyrian capital city, protected like the city of Assur (e.g., ARAB, 2, §§54, 79, 92, 99, 102, 104, 107, 117, 182, 913, 914, 983, 1008, 1180, 1182, 1183). Harran was the capital city of Assur-uballit, the last Assyrian king (ARAB, 2, §§1180, 1182, 1183).

²⁴ Pliny, 5:21, 6:30. Also see Amm. Mar., 23:22f.

²⁵ Pliny, 5:13, 6:10, 17, 29, 31; Ptolemy, *Geog.*, 6:1 §1–3, Map 5 of Asia; Amm. Mar., 23:6:20–22f.

²⁶ Pliny, 6:30, also, 5:20, 6:9, 31; Strabo, 16:1:26f.

²⁷ Herodotus, 2:141.

sources used by Herodotus to refer to Sennacherib as leader of the Arabs and Assyrians (i.e., Assyrians, Babylonians, and Mesopotamians), and to call Sennacherib an Arab, since western Assyria was known in his day as an Arab country and Babylonia was still referred to as Assyria. Indeed, Babylonia itself, from the days of Sennacherib, had been repopulated with various Arab tribes. These Arabs settled among the remaining Chaldaean and other native people remaining in that land. The words of Herodotus are merely a matter of 5th century B.C.E. definition and not proof of a second campaign by Sennacherib.

Tribute to Nineveh

An indication of two campaigns is also believed found in that portion of *Assyrian Annals* wherein Sennacherib mentions Hezekiah's tribute.²⁸ In those documents concerned with the third campaign, the advocates of two invasions charge that Hezekiah sent his tribute to Nineveh.²⁹ In Scriptures, meanwhile, Hezekiah is said to have sent his tribute to Sennacherib at Lachish.³⁰ The perceived difference is used to discredit the accuracy of the Biblical account.

This argument is a misrepresentation of these records. To begin with, 2 Kings, 18:14–16, only states that Hezekiah sent 300 talents of silver, along with all of the silver that was found in the house of Yahweh (i.e., the total of 800 talents of silver reported in the Assyrian account)³¹ and 30 talents of gold to Sennacherib while the latter was at Lachish. It does not mention any other gifts. The Assyrian records, on the other hand, were much more concerned with itemizing the spoils. As a result, they gave a more complete catalogue.³²

The point is that the Assyrian records do not say that all the presents were sent to Nineveh. It distinguishes between two types of gifts: hard currency and the gifts of servants, women and other kinds of treasures (couches of ivory, sandu-stones, jewels, etc.).³³ The gifts of people and other treasures are introduced with the statement, "In addition to the 30 talents of gold and the 800 talents of silver there were (etc.)."³⁴ These items are specifically said to have been brought "after me to Nineveh, my royal city."³⁵ The money, on the other hand, was personally delivered:

To pay tribute and to accept (lit. "do") servitude, he
dispatched his messengers (to me).³⁶

These words agree with Josephus, who states that Hezekiah sent the money to the Assyrian king, but "when the Assyrian received the money, he

²⁸ AS, p. 34, 3:41–49, p. 60, l. 56–58, p. 70, l. 31f.

²⁹ BS, 63, p. 593.

³⁰ 2 Kings, 18:14–17.

³¹ See above n. 28.

³² See above n. 28; also see below Parallel Corpora A, p. 120.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ AS, p. 34, 3:41, p. 60, l. 56, p. 70, l. 31.

³⁵ AS, p. 34, 3:47f, p. 60, l. 58, p. 70, l. 32.

³⁶ AS, p. 34, 3:48f, p. 60, l. 58, p. 70, l. 32.

paid no regard to the agreement he had made."³⁷ Only the money was received while Sennacherib was at Lachish. The other treasures and the servants were sent directly to Assyria.

Kemper Fullerton, interestingly, confesses that the Assyrian record "is here admittedly obscure" and even offers a possible explanation that would solve the contradiction.³⁸ Yet the Assyrian records are not obscure. The real issue is whether or not Sennacherib ever claimed that the hard currency was sent to Nineveh. The simple fact is, he never did. Therefore, 2 Kings and the Assyrian records remain in harmony.

Number of Assyrian Dead

Another issue used to discredit the account in Scriptures comes with the stated number of Assyrians killed by the plague at Jerusalem. In 2 Kings, 19:35, and Isaiah, 37:36, supported by Josephus and Berosus,³⁹ it is mentioned that 185,000 Assyrian soldiers died.⁴⁰ Josephus even notes that this number only represented "some" of the Assyrian army positioned at Jerusalem and that the rest were removed after the plague's destruction.⁴¹ This figure is summarily dismissed as being far too excessive.⁴² Once again a clear bias is shown against Scriptures.

The number of 185,000 men killed outside the city of Jerusalem is snubbed only because those who disbelieve it have their own personal concept of what is reasonable. Their own prejudice envisions a limited capacity for these ancient empires, picturing them as petty states incapable of manning more than a few thousand men in arms. Standing against this assumption is the ancient testimony of vast armies. King Xerxes of Persia, for example, when he invaded Greece in 480 B.C.E., put into the field 1,700,000 men.⁴³ It took his army 7 days and 7 nights to cross the Hellespont.⁴⁴ Yet the Assyrian-Mesopotamian region, from which Sennacherib drew his army, held a far greater population than the one found at the time of the Persian Empire.⁴⁵

³⁷ Jos., *Antiq.*, 10:1:1 §4.

³⁸ BS, 63, p. 593, p. 627, n. 59.

³⁹ Josephus citing Berosus, Jos., *Antiq.*, 10:1:4f.

⁴⁰ The B. Sanh., 95b, reports that there were 45,000 princes on chariots (i.e., sons of well-to-do families), 80,000 warriors in coat-of-mail, and 60,000 swordsmen of the front line and cavalymen. The Baraita teaches that the total army of Sennacherib consisted of 2,600,000 men less one *ribbo* (10,000?), i.e., 2,590,000 (B. Sanh., 95b). This figure undoubtedly represents the entire host brought with the Assyrian king, including wives, children, prostitutes, baggage men, etc., who accompanied and acted as support units for the army.

⁴¹ Jos., *Antiq.*, 10:2:1 §24.

⁴² E.g., AUSS, 4.1, p. 28.

⁴³ For the size of the army of Xerxes the Great, see Herodotus, 7:60.

⁴⁴ Herodotus, 7:56.

⁴⁵ The marked difference in population size is strikingly portrayed with the resistance faced by the Assyrians when they drove westward to create their empire. During the 9th and 8th centuries B.C.E., the Assyrians fought numerous wars against large population centers found among their western neighbors. The Persian Empire of the 6th and 5th centuries B.C.E., on the other hand, were faced with very limited populations and they had no opposition in Mesopotamia and the Syrian-Judean regions until they reached Egypt. The land once held by the nation of Israel, for example, held only a small population of the Samaritans, who had been exiled from Persia and the

The Assyrian inscriptions, in fact, support the high figures found in Scriptures. For example, the invasion of Syria by Shalmaneser III reflects the large military capacity of the Assyrians. In Shalmaneser III's fourteenth campaign he mustered 120,000 men, crossed the Euphrates and defeated a revolt of the kings in Syria.⁴⁶ Shalmaneser III was not as powerful a king as Sennacherib and his invasion against Syria was far more limited in scope. Imagine how large an army it would be deemed as necessary to take on the joint Egyptian and Kushite Empire rather than the petty Syrian states.

When the Egyptians and Ethiopians invaded western Asia, they also brought with them huge armies. Shishak of Egypt, for example, came against Jerusalem "with 1,200 chariots, and with 60,000 horsemen; and there was no counting of the people who came with them out of Egypt, Lubim, Sukkim, and Kushim."⁴⁷ Josephus is even more specific, stating that besides the horsemen and chariots Shishak had "four hundred thousand foot-soldiers."⁴⁸ Not long after, Zerah the Kushite moved against Judah "with an army of a million and 300 chariots."⁴⁹ Josephus further defines these numbers as "900,000 foot-soldiers, and 100,000 horsemen and 300 chariots."⁵⁰ At the same time, King Asa of Judah opposed Zerah with 580,000 warriors.⁵¹

The size of Sennacherib's forces can also be judged. Years after the humiliation of his third campaign, Sennacherib went to war against the Babylonian regions (an event comparable to a war against Egypt). The Assyrian king claims to have destroyed 150,000 enemy warriors in a single battle at Halulê.⁵² Yet Assyria was defeated in this contest, which at best could be described as a draw.⁵³ The Assyrian losses, therefore, must have been comparable, if not greater, than that of their foes—and the wounded are not even considered. At the same time, no one would be audacious enough to believe that the Assyrian army was totally destroyed, for Sennacherib returned home with more than enough troops to enable him to claim victory.⁵⁴ An attack force of some 360,000 to 400,000 would be wholly in keeping with the ratio to their losses.

Large numbers of troops, therefore, were not uncommon. A major thrust against western Asia and Egypt would, by logistics alone, require an immense army. Furthermore, it need not be assumed that all 185,000 men who died outside Jerusalem arrived at that city when Rabshakeh made his initial appearance before its walls. Undoubtedly, a large force of around 50,000 could

East and forced to resettle in that land. Judah, which had remained desolate during the latter part of the Babylonian Empire, also had only a small number of Jews who had been returned to their homeland by the Persians. We shall have much more to say with regard to this issue in our forthcoming volumes IM & GAE, which examine the great migrations coming out of the Middle East into Europe, beginning especially with the collapse of the Assyrian Empire.

⁴⁶ ARAB, 1, §§658f.

⁴⁷ 2 Chron., 12:3. Jos., *Antiq.*, 8:10:2, identifies the Lubim with the Libyans, and the Sukkim with the Trogydtes of Northeastern Africa.

⁴⁸ Jos., *Antiq.*, 8:10:2.

⁴⁹ 2 Chron., 14:9.

⁵⁰ Jos., *Antiq.*, 8:12:1.

⁵¹ 2 Chron., 14:8; Jos., *Antiq.*, 8:12:1.

⁵² AS, pp. 91f, rev. *l.* 9–15.

⁵³ ABC, p. 80, 3:13–18.

⁵⁴ AS, pp. 15–17.

have been sent in order to build the earth mounds at the various city gates and to enforce the blockade of the city until others arrived. At this point these men would have begun the groundwork for a siege (e.g., cutting trees for lumber, bringing in supplies, building siege engines and mounds, etc.). The greater army would have remained with Sennacherib until well after the battle near Eltekeh, where he defeated a combined army of Egyptians and Ethiopians, described as “a countless host.”⁵⁵ After his victory at Eltekeh, Sennacherib would have sent a large force in pursuit of the remaining Egyptian and Ethiopian troops. This pursuit would have been followed up with an order to begin the siege at Pelusium. The control of Pelusium was necessary in order to close the door on the main highway out of Egypt. Sennacherib, meanwhile, took the last bastion of Palestim resistance away by conquering Ekron and the surrounding towns.⁵⁶

After the overthrow of Ekron, the Assyrian king would, by necessity, require a short repose to consolidate his conquest, rest his main army, and reorganize and establish his full political control over the area. Three weeks or so would be more than enough to accomplish this phase. At the end of this period, Sennacherib would have marched to Pelusium with the greater part of his army in order to begin the siege of that city. This last detail is verified by Herodotus. He states that the Assyrian king came against Egypt with a “great host,” which prompted the Egyptian king named Sethos to gather a ragtag army and march to the city of Pelusium. After the Egyptian units entered the city, “Their enemies came here also,” i.e., the main force under Sennacherib arrived. While at Pelusium, the Assyrians spent “a great deal of time on the siege.”⁵⁷ Then, one night, with the earthworks having already been raised “against the walls on the point of attacking,”⁵⁸ the Assyrians were struck by a plague carried by mice.⁵⁹

With one calamity came word of another: King Tirhaqah of Kush was advancing through the desert with a large army to make an attack on the Assyrians. Upon hearing this news, Sennacherib retreated with his surviving forces, “without accomplishing anything,” still in hope of laying his hands on Hezekiah and the city of Jerusalem.⁶⁰ Arriving at Jerusalem, the main army, having retreated from Pelusium, would have joined forces with those who had previously been stationed at Jerusalem. Berosus states, “And Sennacherib returned to Jerusalem from his war with Egypt, reaching there he found the force under Rabshakeh in danger from a plague, for the deity had visited a pestilential sickness upon his army, and on the first night of the siege one hundred and eighty-five thousand men had perished with their commanders

⁵⁵ AS, p. 31, 2:80, p. 69, l. 24.

⁵⁶ AS, p. 32, 3:6–14, p. 70, l. 25–27.

⁵⁷ Jos., *Antiq.*, 10:2:1 §17.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Jos., *Antiq.*, 10:1:4; Herodotus, 2:141.

⁶⁰ 2 Kings, 19:9–13; Isa., 37:9–13; Jos., *Antiq.*, 10:1:4, 10:2:1 §17.

and officers.”⁶¹ Sennacherib had no choice but to retreat in shame with what remained of his army back to Nineveh.⁶²

Since at this point there were only two great cities on Sennacherib’s agenda, Pelusium and Jerusalem, it is fair to deduce that the king divided his forces between the two. For glory’s sake, he would have personally led the assault on Pelusium. Besides, although Pelusium was less fortified, it was more important. It needed to be brought under control first in order to close off any further Egyptian counteroffensive. For this reason it had been prepared for assault first. Accordingly, it is also fair to conclude that the army brought from Assyria was many times the size of that part of the army set against Jerusalem. A total of some 370,000 to 400,000 is very likely (a similar estimate to that which can be applied to Sennacherib’s Babylonian campaign, wherein he claims to have killed 150,000 enemy troops in a single losing contest).⁶³

Death of Sennacherib

To buttress their view, those holding to the two-invasion concept also point to the statement found in both 2 Kings, 19:36f, and Isaiah, 37:37f, which reports the following as taking place after the destruction of Sennacherib’s army:

And Sennacherib the king of Assyria departed and went, and returned and lived in Nineveh. And it was as he was bowing himself in the house of Nisroch his *eloahi*,⁶⁴ then Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons struck him with the sword and they escaped into the land of Ararat. And reigned Esarhaddon his son in his place.

This passage is interpreted to “imply” or give the “impression” that Sennacherib was murdered soon after returning to Nineveh,⁶⁵ an occurrence which took place on Tebeth (Dec./Jan.) 20, 681 B.C.E.⁶⁶ Unfortunately, this interpretation is self-serving. First, the statement does not give any length of time between Sennacherib’s return from Judah and his death. It only reports that Sennacherib went back to live in Nineveh and that, at some later unspecified point in time, he was murdered while worshiping in the temple of Nisroch.

Second, there would have been several years between the two events with either explanation: 20 years if he returned in 701 and 6 years if in 687 B.C.E., the last possible year in the two-invasion scenario. Neither construction accommodates the interpretation that Sennacherib was murdered immediately

⁶¹ Quoted in Jos., *Antiq.*, 10:1:4f; cf. 2 Kings, 19:35; Isa., 37:36; 2 Chron., 32:21.

⁶² 2 Kings, 19:36; Isa., 37:37; 2 Chron., 32:21; Jos., *Antiq.*, 10:1:5.

⁶³ See above n. 52.

⁶⁴ In Hebrew the generic word for a deity is “*eloah*,” plural “*eloahi*,” and collective noun “*eloahim*.” Each term has a significance which is glossed over by the single English translation “God.” Accordingly, we shall utilize a transliteration of the Hebrew for a clearer understanding of the original texts (see discussion in SNY, pp. 5–10).

⁶⁵ AUSS, 4.1, pp. 26f; AHI, p. 303; BS, 63, p. 596.

⁶⁶ AS, p. 161, 3:34.

after his return nor does the Hebrew style of writing suggest one.⁶⁷ Even Siegfried Horn, a leading advocate for two invasions, was forced to admit that this argument was “not very strong, since the Biblical stories do not say how long Sennacherib ‘dwelt at Nineveh’ after his return from Palestine before he was murdered.”⁶⁸ Horn felt that his own “impression” of the passages from Scriptures was that it did not allow that two decades had passed.⁶⁹ Yet a subjective impression is not a fact. Neither is it a basis for concluding two invasions against Judah. Reading the text for exactly what it has to offer, it is unreasonable to assume that it does not accommodate 20 years. It leaves this issue wide open.

Spelling of Hezekiah

Another argument advanced to suggest a break in the text of 2 Kings, which would allow for the insertion of a second campaign against Judah, is the circumstance that in 2 Kings, 18:14–16, which deals with the tribute paid by Hezekiah, the name of Hezekiah is spelt *הזקיה* (*H-z-q-y-h*; Hezeqiyah). In verses 17ff, meanwhile, it is rendered *הזקיהו* (*H-z-q-y-h-u*; Hezeqiyahu). This variation in the spelling of Hezekiah’s name, it is adjudged, reveals a later hand in the material.⁷⁰ It is then suggested that the story found in 2 Kings, 18:14–16, is the first invasion, while the verses beginning with 18:17 represent the second.

This construct holds a number of difficulties. To begin with, verse 13, which begins this history with the words, “In the 14th year of King Hezekiah,” also gives the king’s name as *הזקיהו* (*H-z-q-y-h-u*), the same as verses 17ff. If verses 14–16 (which story is not contained within the two other versions found in Scriptures) is, in fact, the work of a later editor, then this detail would indicate that 14–16 were inserted between verses 13 and 17. Yet if this is true, then verses 17 and following are dated to the 14th year of Hezekiah. It would disprove the second-invasion hypothesis, for Hezekiah’s 14th year is undeniably the same year that Sennacherib began his third campaign (702/701 B.C.E., spring reckoning)!

Furthermore, the king’s name is spelt *הזקיהו* (*H-z-q-y-h-u*) in the entire history of both Isaiah and 2 Chronicles, starting from the 14th year of Hezekiah on. Indeed, Isaiah’s version goes from the introduction of the invasion of Judah in Hezekiah’s 14th year,⁷¹ which parallels 2 Kings, 18:13, directly to the history

⁶⁷ Kemper Fullerton agrees that the Hebrew expression “and he dwelt in Nineveh” might in itself “allow the supposition that considerable time elapsed between the arrival of Sennacherib in his capital and his murder.” But he then disallows it, interpreting that the point of the judgment against the Assyrian king for his invasion of Judah would in that case be largely lost (BS, 63, p. 628, n. 69). Yet nowhere in Scriptures does it claim that the death of Sennacherib was a judgment for his invasion of Judah. All that Isaiah prophesied was that the Assyrian king would not shoot an arrow at the city or enter into Jerusalem, and that he would return to his home by the road upon which he came (2 Kings, 19:32–34; Isa., 37:33–35). The statement of Sennacherib’s death merely reports how the Assyrian king died. It is not meant to support any particular prophecy.

⁶⁸ AUSS, 4.1, p. 27.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ E.g., BS, 63, pp. 621f, n. 16; SIP, pp. 37f; JTEH, p. 165.

⁷¹ Isa., 36:1.

of Rabshakeh being sent from Lachish,⁷² which parallels 2 Kings, 18:17 (see Parallel Corpora A). The Aramaic text of Targum Jonathan, on the other hand, uses חֲזַקְיָהּ (*H-z-q-y-h*) throughout its translation of both 2 Kings and Isaiah.

The response to this dilemma by those advocating two invasions is to dismiss the evidence because, based upon their own reconstruction, 2 Kings, 18:13a, which mentions the 14th year of Hezekiah, is “incompatible with verses 17ff.”⁷³ Yet it is only incompatible because of their own reconstruction, not because of the evidence. Leo L. Honor immediately recognized this confused thinking when he wrote:

Consequently, since v.13 does not meet either of the two criteria that have been used for distinguishing vv.14–16 from the rest of the account, the most natural inference to draw concerning v.13 is that it is derived from the same source as II K xviii 17ff. To do so, however, makes untenable the position of those scholars who see an irreconcilable conflict between vv.14–16 and 17ff., and, as a result, conclude that the two can not refer to the same events, because 13b is in complete harmony with vv.14–16, and whatever conflict exists between vv.14–16 and 17ff. also exists between 13b and 17ff.⁷⁴

In order to maintain their thesis, it is necessary for the advocates of the two-invasion hypothesis to charge the authors of these books from Scriptures with borrowing verse 13a from another source as an introductory statement and then superimposing it upon 13b. They also conclude that the Isaiah recension, in turn, borrowed this introduction from 2 Kings.⁷⁵ But if this is true, would not the Isaiah recension also borrow vv.13bff? Yet Isaiah does not even mention the section which is attributed to a so-called first invasion.

In actuality, their defense comes down to accusing the accounts in Scriptures with either falsely merging the histories of two invasions or of ignorance in the matter. In essence, it is argued, the versions found in Scriptures are mistakes, deceptions, half-truths, myths or outright lies. This attitude persists despite the fact that there is no evidence whatsoever that proves these versions incorrect. There is only disagreement when one sets Scriptures against the reconstruction of history based upon the personal preference for two invasions.

If, for the moment, we credit the ancient authors with knowing about that which they speak—that their national annals and histories reflect what really happened—and if we allow that the intentions of the prophets and men of Yahweh were honorable and did not intend to deceive their readers, then three excellent reasons for the variant spelling of Hezekiah’s name are available to us.

⁷² Isa., 36:2.

⁷³ BS, 63, pp. 621f, n. 16.

⁷⁴ SIP, pp. 37f.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

First, the name חזקיהו (*H-z-q-y-h-u*) means “strengthened of Yahu.”⁷⁶ As we demonstrate in our text entitled *The Sacred Name* אֱלֹהֵינוּ , the form יה (*Y-h*) is likewise spelt יהו (*Y-h-u*), יה being pronounced “Yahu.”⁷⁷ It is also spelt יו (*Y-u*) but pronounced “Yahu.”⁷⁸ Therefore, חזקיה (*H-z-q-y-h*) is but another form of חזקיהו (*H-z-q-y-h-u*). Since all three letters in the name יהו were Hebrew vowel-consonants, and, in Hebrew, vowels were for the most part left out of words, it is not uncommon to find the spelling of a person’s name sometimes using the ו (*u*) and other times not.⁷⁹ Therefore, as Leo L. Honor points out, it is possible to assume that “the spelling is interchangeable, and that it is purely an accidental circumstance that it is spelled one way in vv.14–16, and another in II K xviii 17–xx 19.”⁸⁰ Indeed, ancient writers were never consistent in such matters.

Second, the absence of the ו (*u*) in the name Hezekiyahu in vv. 14–16, may have been quite by accident. A scribe might simply have left off the ו (*u*) ending unintentionally while copying the text, and this error has been carried on by later copyists.

Third, vv. 14–16 may in fact be the hand of the prophet Ezra, who composed 2 Kings. He might well have had in his possession extra data about this story from a second source—vv. 14–16, by the way, are fully corroborated by the Assyrian inscriptions.⁸¹ Ezra then added this information to the history he acquired from the ancient Judahite annals. None of these possibilities remove the important contributions provided by these histories. The evidence of only one invasion is still fully established.

Conclusion

Our close examination of the supportive arguments and items of evidence used by the advocates of the two-invasion hypothesis to buttress their reconstruction proves that none of these contain any substance or carry any weight. Not one proves two invasions. They are merely interpretations based on the preconceived premise that there were two separate invasions by Sennacherib against Judah and that the records must be reworked in order to reflect this view. What these arguments do demonstrate is an unfair and unrealistic bias against Scriptures. When the clutter of these arguments has been cleared, we find that the case for two invasions rests upon one issue, and one issue alone: the popular identification of King Tirhaqah of Kush, the king who came out against Sennacherib at the time the Assyrian army was decimated by a plague, with Khu-Re’ Nefertem Taharqa, whose reign did not begin in Egypt until 689 B.C.E.⁸²

⁷⁶ SEC, Heb. #2396, 2388–2392, plus 3050; DB, p. 246. The deity Yahu Yahweh, Isa., 12:2, 26:4.

⁷⁷ SNY, pp. 99–114. Also see TNY.

⁷⁸ E.g., יֹזָכָר (*Yahuzakar*), SEC, Heb. #3108; יָחֻקָּה (*Yahukhah*), SEC, Heb. #3109; יֹחָנָן (*Yahukhanan*), SEC, Heb. #3110, 3076; etc.

⁷⁹ For example, in Jer., 40, we find the same person called both גְּדַלְיָה (*G-d-l-y-h*) and גְּדַלְיָהוּ (*G-d-l-y-h-u*); in Jer., 41, we find the same person called both נְתַנְיָה (*N-th-n-y-h*) and נְתַנְיָהוּ (*N-th-n-y-h-u*); in 1 Kings, 22, we find the same person called both צִדְקִיָּה (*Z-d-q-y-h*) and צִדְקִיָּהוּ (*Z-d-q-y-h-u*); in 2 Kings, 15, the same person is called both זְכַרְיָה (*Z-k-r-y-h*) and זְכַרְיָהוּ (*Z-k-r-y-h-u*); and so forth. Also see examples in SNY, p. 107.

⁸⁰ SIP, p. 38.

⁸¹ Cf. AS, p. 34, 3:41–49, p. 60, l. 56–60, p. 70, l. 31f. Also see Jos., *Antiq.*, 10:1:1.

⁸² For the chronology of the Ethiopian kings of Egypt’s Dynasty XXV, see App. F.