

SENNACHERIB

Upon acceding to the throne of Assyria following the death of Sargon II in battle, Sennacherib (705–681 BCE) faced two major insurrections: in the West, a coalition of a number of Phoenician and Syrian kingdoms led by King Hezekiah of Judah, and in the South, the combined forces of the Chaldeans and Elamites under the leadership of Merodach-baladan. A single campaign to the West in 701 BCE ended in a decisive victory by the Assyrian army. But this success was not matched on the Babylonian front where war continued on and off from 703 until 689 BCE. In that year, Sennacherib pressed on to victory against Babylon, which was followed by the wanton destruction of the city. In 681, Sennacherib was murdered by his son, Arda-Mullissu, who had been passed over by his father who chose Esarhaddon as his successor (cf. 2 Kgs 19:37; Babylonian Chronicle no. 1 [Text no. 41, lines 34–35]).

No. 28—SENNACHERIB'S CAMPAIGN TO JUDAH

The events of the year 701 BCE are among the most discussed in biblical research. Since the discovery of Sennacherib's inscriptions at the beginning of Assyriological research in the mid-19th century, countless reconstructions of the Assyrian campaign to Judah have been proffered, without any scholarly agreement having been reached, except perhaps in the most general terms. One suspects that it is the uncommon multiplicity of written sources referring to the events that gives rise to so many differing reconstructions. These sources include: the narratives in 2 Kgs 18–19; Isa 36–37; 2 Chr 32, as well as various prophecies of Isaiah; the Assyrian annal report; a wall relief from the palace of Sennacherib depicting the investiture and surrender of the Judean town of Lachish.

The Assyrian document presented here, known as the Rassam Cylinder, is the earliest source; its colophon reads: "Month of Iyyar, (eponymate of



Fig. 13. Prism of Sennacherib (Israel Museum).

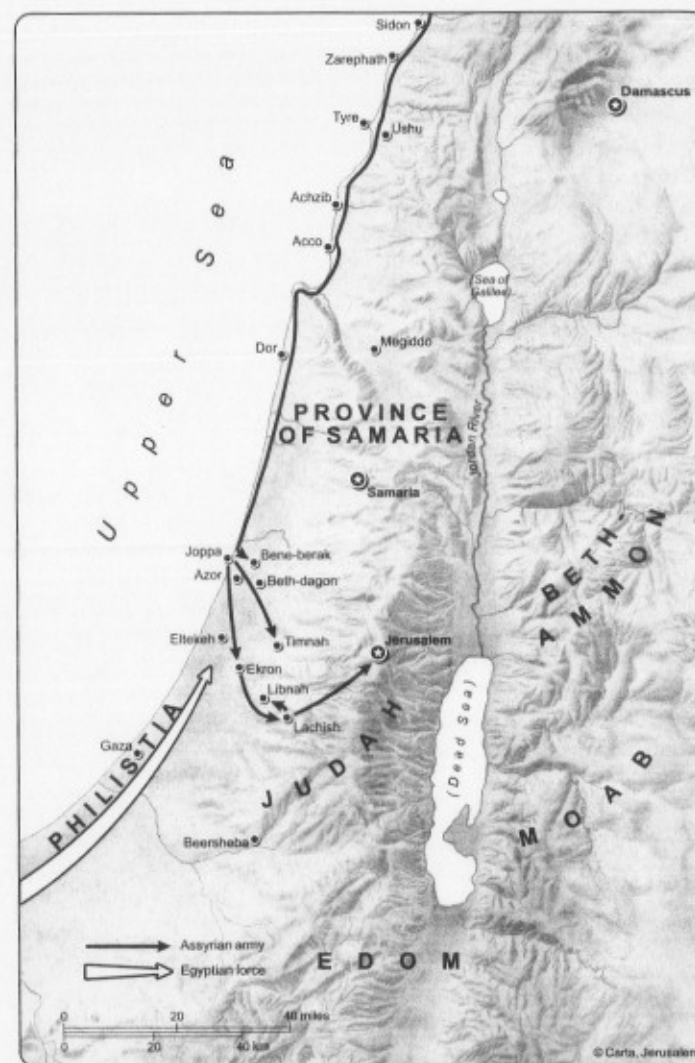
Mitunu, governor of Isana," i.e., spring 700 BCE. This date, when compared with those of earlier prisms that report just two campaigns, helps establish the date of the "third campaign," the campaign to Judah, to 701 BCE.

From the Assyrian point of view, the military operations in Judah were undertaken to quell the revolt of vassal states in the West that had broken out upon the death of Sargon II four years earlier. The literary nature of narrative, in which events are arranged topically rather than chronologically, i.e., they are grouped under the rubrics of "the submissive" or "the defeated," does not permit reconstructing the itinerary of the campaign. It should also be kept in mind that this report is a part of the royal annals, which sought to magnify and memorialize the achievements of Sennacherib on the battlefield and in civil affairs. Thus, setbacks, if such there were, inevitably appear as Assyrian advances; see in detail Tadmor 1986; also Laato 1995.

The biblical account, on the other hand, is more complex than the Assyrian one; it is composed of multiple sources that have been juxtaposed in the present text, causing much tension between them. In the Book of Kings, three distinct units of different genres and different ages are identifiable: 2 Kgs 18:13–16, a chronicle-like report; 2 Kgs 18:17–19:37, two intertwined prophetic accounts.

The greatest point of discrepancy—indeed the bone of contention of most studies—lies in the contradictory endings to the campaign reported by each of the contending sides. The biblical account tells of the miraculous defeat of the Assyrian army (2 Kgs 19:35), while the Assyrian annals portray Sennacherib as having roundly defeated Hezekiah, who submitted to his overlord and sent a substantial tribute payment to Nineveh at the conclusion of the campaign. For the present, let it suffice to reiterate that there is no record of Sennacherib having undertaken a second western campaign during his reign, and considering the development of events in the West during the first quarter of the 7th century, all the events described in our sources refer to a single campaign in 701 BCE; see Cogan 2001. For thorough critical discussions of the events of year 701, see the studies of Gonçalves 1986 and Gallagher 1999.

- 32–35 In my third campaign, I marched to Hatti. The awesome splendor of my lordship overwhelmed Luli, king of Sidon, and he fled overseas far-off. The terrifying nature of the weapon of (the god) Ashur my lord overwhelmed his strong cities, Greater Sidon, Little Sidon, Bit-zitti, Šariptu, Maḥaliba, Ushu, Achzib, Acco, walled cities (provided) with food and water for his garrisons,



SENNACHERIB'S CAMPAIGN TO THE WEST, 701 BCE

and they bowed in submission at my feet. I installed Tuba³lu on his royal throne over them and imposed upon him tribute and dues for my lordship (payable) annually without interruption.

- 3 The kings of Amurru, all of them—Minu³jimmu of Samsimuruna, Tuba³lu of Sidon, Abdili³ti of Arvad, Urumilki of Byblos, Mitinti of Ashdod, Pudu³ilu of Beth-Ammon, Chemosh-nadbi of Moab, Ayarammu of Edom—brought me sumptuous presents as their abundant audience-gift, fourfold, and kissed my feet.
- 1 As for Sidqa, king of Ashkelon, who had not submitted to my yoke—his family gods, he himself, his wife, his sons, his daughters, his brothers, and (all the rest of) his descendants, I deported and brought him to Assyria. I set Sharru-lu-dari, son of Rukibtu, their former king, over the people of Ashkelon and imposed upon him payment of tribute (and) presents to my lordship; he (now) bears my yoke. In the course of my campaign, I surrounded and conquered Beth-dagon, Joppa, Bene-berak, Azor, cities belonging to Sidqa, who did not submit quickly, and I carried off their spoil.
- 1 The officials, the nobles, and the people of Ekron who had thrown Padi, their king, (who was) under oath and obligation to Assyria, into iron fetters and handed him over in a hostile manner to Hezekiah, the Judean, took fright because of the offense they had committed. The kings of Egypt, (and) the bowmen, chariot corps and cavalry of the kings of Cush assembled a countless force and came to their (i.e., the Ekronites) aid. In the plain of Eltekeh, they drew up their ranks against me and sharpened their weapons. Trusting in the god Ashur, my lord, I fought with them and inflicted a defeat upon them. The Egyptian charioteers and princes, together with the charioteers of the Cushites, I personally took alive in the midst of the battle. I besieged and conquered Eltekeh and Timnah and carried off their spoil. I advanced to Ekron and slew its officials and nobles who had stirred up rebellion and hung their bodies on watchtowers all about the city. The citizens who committed sinful acts, I counted as spoil, and I ordered the release of the rest of them, who had not sinned. I freed Padi, their king, from Jerusalem and set him on the throne as king over them and imposed tribute for my lordship over him.

As for Hezekiah, the Judean, I besieged 46 of his fortified walled cities and surrounding smaller towns, which were without number. Using packed-down ramps and applying battering rams, infantry attacks by mines,

breeches, and siege machines (or perhaps: storm ladders), I conquered (them). I took out 200,150 people, young and old, male and female, horses, mules, donkeys, camels, cattle, and sheep, without number, and counted them as spoil. He himself, I locked up within Jerusalem, his royal city, like a bird in a cage. I surrounded him with armed posts, and made it unthinkable (literally, "taboo") for him to exit by the city gate. His cities which I had despoiled, I cut off from his land and gave them to Mitinti, king of Ashdod, Padi, king of Ekron, and Šilli-Bel, king of Gaza, and thus diminished his land. I imposed dues and gifts for my lordship upon him, in addition to the former tribute, their yearly payment.

- 55-58 He, Hezekiah, was overwhelmed by the awesome splendor of my lordship, and he sent me after my departure to Nineveh, my royal city, his elite troops (and) his best soldiers, which he had brought in as reinforcements to strengthen Jerusalem, with 30 talents of gold, 800 talents of silver, choice antimony, large blocks of carnelian, beds (inlaid) with ivory, armchairs (inlaid) with ivory, elephant hides, ivory, ebony-wood, boxwood, multicolored garments, garments of linen, wool (dyed) red-purple and blue-purple, vessels of copper, iron, bronze and tin, chariots, siege shields, lances, armor, daggers for the belt, bows and arrows, countless trappings and implements of war, together with his daughters, his palace women, his male and female singers. He (also) dispatched his messenger to deliver the tribute and to do obeisance.

* This translation updates and replaces the one I presented in COS 2.

- 32-35 **In my third campaign, I marched to Hatti**—Sennacherib's annals are numbered sequentially and not by the years of his reign as was the practice of Tiglath-pileser III and Sargon II. In this manner, the scribes were able to cover up the fact that the king did not undertake an annual campaign. The date of the third campaign, 701 BCE, is determined by the name of the eponym given in the colophon. Two campaigns preceded the present one, the First Campaign to Babylon against Merodach-baladan, the Second Campaign to various kingdoms to the east and northeast of Assyria.

Hatti—That is, Syria, referring to the West; see note to Text no. 4, line 5.

Luli, king of Sidon...he fled overseas far-off—Luli was king of Tyre, and also bore the traditional title "king of Sidon," as did the earlier kings Hiram I

and Ethbaal. He followed Metenna on the throne of Tyre (see Text no. 11, line 16') and reigned for 36 years (c. 729–694 BCE). His relations with Assyria knew many ups and downs (see Katzenstein 1997:220–258) and his rebellion against Sennacherib led to his flight. Luli escaped capture and his whereabouts were unknown at the time of the composition of the Rassam Cylinder. The report inscribed on the Bull colossus (c. 696–694 BCE) updates the story; see Text no. 30. A relief in the palace of Sennacherib apparently depicts Luli's departure—the loading of his family on ships; see Barnett 1969: 6 and pl. 1.

Greater Sidon—Perhaps the fortified quarter of the city; also referred to in Josh 11:8; 19:28.

Little Sidon. This site is mentioned only here; it may refer to a particular quarter (the port area?) or to a suburb of the main city.

Bit-zitti—This toponym appears on a Phoenician seal בִּית זִית (Beit Zeit) and might be the town Zayta, south of Sidon (so Greenfield 1985:132).

Şarip̄tu—On the Mediterranean coast, 13 km south of Sidon. The ancient name is preserved in the nearby village of Sarafand. The prophet Elijah found food and shelter in the home of a woman from this town, Zarephath; see 1 Kgs 17:8–24.

Maḥaliba—Kh. el-Maḥālib; referred to in the inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III (see Text no. 12, line 6). It is assigned to the tribe of Asher in Judg 1:31.

Ushu—The coastal quarter of Tyre, opposite Tyre island; see Text no. 37. Many identify it with Tell er-Rashidiyeh near Rās el-ʿAyin. Some find the name in the biblical town Hosah in Josh 19:29, which is located 2.5 km east of Tell er-Rashidiyeh; but there are phonetic difficulties in this identification.

Achzib—Located on the seacoast at the mouth of Wadi ez-Zib, in the territory of the tribe of Asher (Josh 19:29; Judg 1:31), 3 km from the modern Israeli city of Nahariya.

Acco—The site of biblical Acco is at Tell el-Fuḥḥar, east of the old city of Acco; assigned to the tribe of Asher (Judg 1:31).

I installed Tubaʿlu on the his royal throne over them—With the flight of Luli and as punishment for Tyre's insurrection, Sidon was separated from Tyre and Tubaʿlu was appointed an independent vassal king. Tyre was not captured—Sennacherib had no navy to attack the island city—and appar-

ently he reached an agreement with it some time later; see Katzenstein 1997: 259–262.

36–38 **The kings of Amurru, all of them—Minuḥimmu of Samsimuruna, Tubaʿlu of Sidon, Abdiliʿti of Arvad, Urumilki of Byblos, Mitinti of Ashdod, Puduʿilu of Beth-Ammon, Chemosh-nadbi of Moab, Ayarammu of Edom**—This is a summary list of western vassal kings who submitted to Sennacherib without battle. It is nowhere stated that they had taken part in the revolt against his authority. Note that Tubaʿlu, who was set over Sidon in the course of the campaign, is included among the submissive. The placement of this list at this point in the narrative does not necessarily imply that a ceremony of submission took place at Ushu prior to the continued march of the Assyrian army along the coast towards Philistia (although the later Bull Inscription no. 4 does do so).

Minuḥimmu of Samsimuruna—Unidentified. Some suggest a location along the seacoast in the vicinity of the estuary of Nahr el-Kelb, just north of Beirut.

Puduʿilu of Beth-Ammon—He is also known from an Ammonite stamp seal (פִּדְעָל); see Aḥituv 1992:239–240.

39–41 **As for Šidqa, king of Ashkelon, who had not submitted to my yoke**—Šidqa had apparently led an anti-Assyrian uprising in Ashkelon, during which he seized power and ousted (perhaps assassinated) Rukibti, who had been appointed by Tiglath-pileser III; see Text no. 17, line 10. Šidqa's lineage is not known; Tadmor suggested that he was the younger brother of Rukibti. His name appears on a seal of the servant of his son: "Belonging to Ebed-eliab, son of Shibʿat, servant of Miti(n)ti, son of Šidqa" (Aḥituv 1992:212).

I set Sharru-lu-dari, son of Rukibti, their former king, over the people of Ashkelon—After the capture of Ashkelon, Sharru-lu-dari was appointed king over the city. His Assyrian name means: "May the king live forever." That a Philistine prince bore an Assyrian name is evidence of the pro-Assyrian stance taken by Ashkelon during Rukibti's reign. Whether Sharru-lu-dari had ever spent time as a "hostage" in Assyria, at which time he could have been given his new name, is unknown. Perhaps he received the Assyrian name when Sennacherib appointed him to the throne; Esarhaddon gave the same Assyrian name to one of his Egyptian vassals (see Text no. 36, line 90).

I deported and brought him to Assyria—No details are given as to how

Ashkelon was taken, giving room for the speculation that after the conquest of Šidqa's cities north of the city, the rebels in Ashkelon surrendered without a battle.

In the course of my campaign, I surrounded and conquered Beth-Dagon, Joppa, Bene-berak, Azor, cities belonging to Šidqa—The enclave of cities that was subordinate to Ashkelon was centered on Joppa. Only Ashdod, which lay between them and Ashkelon, had not joined the rebellion.

Beth-dagon—Situated at the site of modern Bet Dagan (formerly Beit Dajan), 9 km southeast of Joppa, and not to be confused with the town of the same name, Beth-dagon, in the Judean Shephelah (Josh 15:41), some 40 km east of the battle area.

Joppa—The large mound overlooking the port of Old Jaffa (Tell Qal'a).

Bene-berak—A Danite city according to Josh 19:45; identified with the former Arab village Ibn-Ibraq (Hēriya).

Azor—Located some 6 km east of Joppa, at the former Arab village of Jazur (nowadays Azor). This town appears in the Greek translation to Josh 19:45 in place of Hebrew *Yehud*.

42–48 **The officials, the nobles, and the people of Ekron who had thrown Padi, their king, (who was) under oath and obligation to Assyria, into iron fetters and handed him over in a hostile manner to Hezekiah, the Judean**—The major Philistine city of Ekron, Tel Mique, near Kibbutz Revadim; it is listed among the Danite cities in Josh 19:43. The archaeology of late 8th century BCE Ekron was interpreted by its excavators Dothan and Gitin 1993 as indicating the relatively small size of the city; see Ussishkin 2006:339–343 for a suggested revision of site's chronology.

Padi, their king—This pro-Assyrian king is known from inscriptions discovered at Ekron; see Gitin, Dothan and Naveh 1997; Gitin and Cogan 1997.

(They) handed him over in a hostile manner to Hezekiah, the Judean—From this statement, it appears that Hezekiah took a leading role in the uprising against Assyria. According to 2 Kgs 18:8: "Hezekiah overran Philistia as far as Gaza and its border areas, from watchtower to fortified town"; this would have included the removal of Padi, the Assyrian protégé in Ekron.

The kings of Egypt, (and) the bowmen, chariot corps and cavalry of the kings of Cush assembled a countless force and came to their (i.e., the

Ekronites') aid—The Egyptian expeditionary force included Egyptians from the Delta and Cushites from Upper Egypt. The biblical source records that Tirhakah, king of Cush (2 Kgs 19:9; Isa 37:9), led these troops in battle. At the time, he was a young, twenty-year-old. This title, "king of Cush," given to him there, is anachronistic, as he did not come to the throne until 690 BCE; at the time of the present battles, Shabatka, his brother, ruled Egypt. For the chronological issues of the Egyptian kings at the end of the 8th century BCE, see the discussions of Kitchen 1973a:378–387; 1973b; Kahn 2001.

In the plain of Eltekeh, they drew up their ranks against me and sharpened their weapons—The battle against the Egyptians was waged in the coastal plain near Eltekeh, identified with Tell esh-Shallaf, about 3 km west of the city of Rehoboth; Eltekeh is a Danite city in Josh 19:44; 21:23.

I fought with them and inflicted a defeat upon them. The Egyptian charioteers and princes, together with the charioteers of the Cushites, I personally took alive in the midst of the battle—In 2 Kgs 19:9, the engagement with the Egyptians took place while negotiations were being undertaken in Jerusalem. The Assyrian annals dissociate the two actions.

I besieged and conquered Eltekeh and Timnah and carried off their spoil—Following the defeat of the Egyptian force, the Assyrians returned to the northern Shephelah and besieged Eltekeh and Timnah. Timnah, a Judean border town (Josh 15:10), is Tel Batash, on the western bank of Nahal Sorek, 7 km west-northwest of Beth-shemesh.

I advanced to Ekron and slew its officials and nobles who had stirred up rebellion and hung their bodies on watchtowers all about the city—The harsh punishment inflicted on the rebels at Ekron is not uncommon in the manual of Assyrian warfare; the use of such tactics was likely aimed at striking terror among the re-conquered citizenry. This practice is graphically illustrated in the Lachish relief of Sennacherib, where the bodies of dead Judeans are shown impaled in front of the city gate. See ANEP, no. 373.

I freed Padi, their king, from Jerusalem and set him on the throne as king over them and imposed tribute for my lordship over him—The return of Padi to Ekron was likely negotiated at the end of the conflict, as part of the terms of surrender of Hezekiah. Its insertion at this point in the report is an example of "closing the narrative circle," which is often out of chronological sequence; for a biblical example of this literary technique, see Exod 16:

35. Two years after Padi's reinstatement to the throne, he sent tribute to Nineveh, as evidenced by the bulla attached to the shipment that bore the inscription: "One talent (of silver) according to the light, royal (talent). From Pidi of Ekron. Month of Marcheshvan, day 23, eponym of Bel-sharrani (i.e., 699 BCE)" (SAA 11, no. 50, p. 42).

49-54 **As for Hezekiah, the Judean**—Later prisms add the phrase: "who had not submitted to my yoke."

I besieged 46 of his fortified walled cities and surrounding smaller towns, which were without number—Cf. the summary statement in 2 Kgs 18:13: "Sennacherib, king of Assyria, marched against all the fortified towns of Judah and seized them."

Using packed-down ramps and applying battering rams, infantry attacks by mines, breeches, and siege machines (or perhaps: storm ladders), I conquered (them)—These assault techniques are illustrated on the Lachish relief (see further Text no. 29). For a discussion from a military point of view, see Yadin 1963:428-437; Eph'al 2008. The destruction wrought by the Assyrian army informed Isaiah's diatribe: "Your land is a waste, your cities burnt down; before your eyes, the yield of your soil is consumed by strangers—A wasteland, like Sodom(!) overthrown. Fair Zion is left like a booth in a vineyard, like a hut in a cucumber field, like a city beleaguered" (Isa 1:7-8).

I took out 200,150 people, young and old, male and female, horses, mules, donkeys, camels, cattle, and sheep, without number, and counted them as spoil—The number of captives deported is extremely large and is at odds with the population estimates of the kingdom of Judah suggested by archaeologists, who set it at approximately 120,000; see Shiloh 1981; Broshi and Finkelstein 1992. The Assyrian scribes sought to enhance the king's victory by inflating the numbers; on this practice, see De Odorico 1995:172-174; for a different opinion, see Millard 1991.

He himself, I locked up within Jerusalem, his royal city, like a bird in a cage. I surrounded him with armed posts, and made it unthinkable (literally, "taboo") for him to exit by the city gate—The topography of Jerusalem did not easily permit the use of siege-wall technique, and so instead, fortified positions were erected to cut the city off from the outside world.

His cities which I had despoiled, I cut off from his land and gave them to Mitinti, king of Ashdod, Padi, king of Ekron, and Šilli-Bel, king of Gaza,

and thus diminished his land—The kingdom of Judah was dismembered by the parcelling out of captured areas to nearby Philistine vassal city-states. In the somewhat later Bull Inscription, Ashkelon is included in this land division: "I gave it (i.e., his land) to the kings of Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron and Gaza" (Frahm 1997, no. 4), perhaps reflecting later arrangements in the Judean Shephelah. These circumstances are likely the background of the lament of the Judean prophet Micah in Mic 1:8-16; see Hallo 1999:40.

I imposed dues and gifts for my lordship upon him, in addition to the former tribute, their yearly payment—Hezekiah's prior vassalage is mentioned here for the first time; cf. 2 Kgs 18:7: "He rebelled against the king of Assyria and would not serve him."

55-58 **His elite troops (and) his best soldiers, which he had brought in as reinforcements to strengthen Jerusalem**—Under the terms of surrender, Judah relinquished its skilled fighting force, which, if the precedent of Samaria was followed (see Text no. 19, col. iv, lines 25-49), was integrated into the Assyrian army. The term for "elite troops" (Akkadian *urbi*) is rarely used in the royal inscriptions, and is unrelated to the similar-sounding Akkadian name for Arabs (*Aribi*); see Cogan and Tadmor 1988:247, n. 2.

30 talents of gold, 800 talents of silver—Similar figures are given in 2 Kgs 18:14: "300 talents of silver and 30 talents of gold." It is further reported that in order to meet the heavy payment, Hezekiah stripped the precious metal overlays in the Temple that he himself had dedicated; see v. 16. The weight of a "light" talent, in use in Mesopotamia at the end of the 8th century BCE, was 30 kg; thus Hezekiah's payment was 900 kg of gold and 24,000 kg of silver. An enormous sum indeed!

Multicolored garments, garments of linen, wool (dyed) red-purple and blue-purple, vessels of copper, iron, bronze and tin, chariots, siege shields, lances, armor, daggers for the belt, bows and arrows, countless trappings and implements of war—This part of the tribute list is omitted in later editions of Sennacherib's annals; it is replaced by the general phrase: "abundant treasure of all kind."

He (also) dispatched his messenger to deliver the tribute and to do obeisance—The tribute payment is said to have been made in Nineveh and received from the hands of a Judean delegation, implying Hezekiah's total surrender and his disablement from further rebellion.