

ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT, by M. Unger

p. 255 Ahaz' reign c. 735-715 B.C.

p. 263 Sennacherib 704 - 681 B.C.

p. 267-8 " launched his campaign to punish Hezekiah (recorded in the Taylor prism) and described in 2 Ki. 18:13-19:37; 2 Chron. 32:1-12; Isa. 36:1-37:38. 701 B.C.

p.268-9 While it is generally agreed that the inscription of Sennacherib, though differing from the Biblical account in some particulars, really confirms it at virtually every point, some scholars magnify the difficulties, and maintain that there were two campaigns rather than one, and that the Biblical compiler "telescoped two parallel campaigns." (footnote to W. F. Albright). The mention of "Tirhakah, king of Ethiopia" (2 Ki. 19:9; Isa. 37:9) is supposed to necessitate a second and later campaign toward the end of Sennacherib's reign (between 689-686 B.C.). An Ethiopian dynasty was ruling Egypt at this time in the person of Shabaka not Taharka (Tirhakah), who did not ascend the throne till about 689 B.C., some dozen years later. This detail, however, scarcely warrants assuming a second invasion for which there is no concrete evidence either in the Bible or in the Assyrian records.

The difficulty can scarcely be completely solved under present sources of knowledge. The probable explanation, however, is that Taharka actually opposed Sennacherib in 701 B.C., but as a high military commander under his uncle Shabaka, who was the ruling Pharaoh. Whether the nephew had the status of a regent at the time, or whether the Judean annalist wrote proleptically, is not known. Difficulties of this sort are frequently solved by further archaeological discoveries.

The destruction of Sennacherib's army, which was besieging Jerusalem, by divine intervention (2 Ki. 19:35; Isa. 37:36) offers an adequate reason why the king never returned to the region of Palestine. Sennacherib's own records, moreover, give ample evidence that he never took Jerusalem. Had he done so, he would not have been silent on so great an achievement. Since he was unable to take the capital of Judah (as the Bible indicates), "he made as good a story out of the siege as possible, and reported that he had shut up poor Hezekiah 'like a bird in a cage.' Actually, Hezekiah was reposing safely in his 'cage.'" (so J.P. Free)