¿The end of Jerusalem? (701 BCE)

YERUSHALAYIM UNDER SIEGE

The Assyrian Emperor Sanherib began the siege of Jerusalem in the year 701aec. Before attacking the city he recommended King Hizqiyahu to surrender to avoid bloodshed.

The terms of the surrender were the following:

* Hizqiyahu should deliver to Sanherib all the valuables of the Bet haMiqdash
* Once Jerusalem becomes an Assyrian province, the Bet HaMiqdash will host the Assyrian gods
* The king and the inhabitants of Jerusalem will be exiled to Nineveh the capital of Assyria, where they would be allowed to live together with other peoples. This would have been the end not only of Yerushalayim but also of the Jewish people. Since the strategy of Sanherib was to integrate the peoples, forcing them to marry each other and to spread themselves in all cities. In this way Sanherib ensured that the nations would loose their identity, forget their origins and would not rebel in the future against the Assyrian empire. Sanherib's threats were not just words. Sanherib had already done this with the Elamites, with the Casites, the Moabites, the Edomites and with many other peoples whose names no one remembers anymore. All were defeated and banished and disappeared into the social melting pot of the Assyrians (□□□□□□ □□ □□□□ □□□□□□).

Hizqiyahu had great walls, provisions and water. But he did not have enough soldiers to defend the city. One of Sanherib's generals, Rabshaqe, publicly mocked Hizqiyahu by telling him: How come you do not surrender? If you want, we can help you to fight against us. We will lend you 2,000 horses from our army. But, let me ask you a question, do you have your 2,000 soldiers who can use them? Sanherib had hundreds of thousands of soldiers very well armed surrounding Yerushalayim, with enough provisions for months. The Assyrians had already devastated all of Israel's other 46 cities, killed their inhabitants and taken more than 200,000 Yehudim into captivity. Yerushalayim was all that remained of the people of Israel … And never before had Jerusalem been so seriously threatened with total destruction. The end seemed inevitable …

THE KING OF ISRAEL'S PRAYER (Yesha'ayahu, chapter 37: 14-21)

King Hizqiyahu, desperate, gave Sanjerib gold and silver from the Bet haMiqdash, hoping that he would desist from destroying Yerushalayim. But this did not work … At that time there was a very important prophet in Israel. His book is the first in the section of Prophets in the Tanakh (Hebrew Bible), Yesha'ayahu haNabí. The story of the communication between Yesha'ayahu and Hizqiyahu is narrated in the book of Kings and also in chapters 36 and 37 of his book. The righteous kings of Israel, like king David, for example, consulted permanently with the prophets. King Hizqiyahu, who was a good king, asked the prophet to pray for "the remaining survivors" of the people of Israel. Yesha'ayahu sent word to king Hizqiyahu not to surrender and not be afraid of the Assyrian king's threats: "He will not enter this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor present himself against it with a shield … On the way by which he proceeded, he will return, and in this city he will not enter, so says HaShem." Hizqiyahu went up to the Temple of Yerushalayim … and prayed: "HaShem, Almighty, God of Israel … You are the only God … You have made the heavens and the earth. And now, listen, HaShem … all that Sanherib has insulted the living God. It is true, HaShem, that the Assyrians have ravaged all these nations and their lands and destroyed their gods. But those gods were idols of wood and stone, the work of human hands. Now, HaShem our God, save us from his hand, and all the kingdoms of the earth will know that only you, HaShem, are God. "

What happened that same night is one of the greatest and most significant (but unfortunately little known) miracles in the history of the Jewish people: a plague struck Sanherib's camp and killed 185,000 of its soldiers. Sanherib had to return to Nineve. And while he continued conquering other nations until the day of his death (681 BCE), he never dared to threaten again Yerushalayim.

AND ALL WILL KNOW THAT ONLY YOU HASHEM, ARE GOD.

One of the unique elements of this miracle is that it was registered by other peoples too, and that those records have still extent. The University of Chicago hosts the famous Sanherib's Prism, in which the Assyrian king boasts of having Jerusalem and its king, Hizqiyahu at his mercy: "like a bird in a cage." But the text ends with the siege of Jerusalem, not with the conquest, because Sanherib did not achieve his goal.

The most famous Greek historian, Herodotus, also writes: "a swarm of field mice [who] gnawed through their quivers and their bows, and the handles of their shields as well, so that the next day, weaponless, all they could do was flee, and their losses were heavy"

The Babylonian historian Beroso, quoted by Josephus, says: "Sanherib…returned to Jerusalem, where he found the troops commanded by Rabshaqe in great danger by the plague. God sent them an illness that … killed one hundred and eighty thousand soldiers, with their captains and centurions. "

To be continued…

Yerushalayim Under Siege Sanherib vs. Hizqiyahu

Hebrew (43.53 min)



English (3.53 min.)

