

Yahweh, the Almighty God of Israel, is with us
"Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet,
and shew my people their transgression,
and the house of Jacob their sins." Isaiah 58:1

Prayer, Praise & Thanksgiving

Study Prayerfully & Study Carefully

The Prayer of Hezekiah

Reading:
2 Kings Chapter 18 & 19

1. Introduction

One of the most basic of spiritual facts in both time and space is: that **'Nothing is impossible with God.'** Problems which appear insoluble to us, **Jehovah the God of Israel can easily set right - if He so chooses.** The difficulty is that we humans lack the knowledge, faith and wisdom to accept this fundamental fact.

Matthew 19: 26: *"But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, **With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.**"*

Mark 10: 27: *"And Jesus looking upon them saith, **With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.**"*

This Sabbath we shall consider an **'impossible situation'** which occurred some two and a half millennia ago; but is relevant today. It was resolved in a most extraordinary way by the LORD God of Israel. I'll read the story from the Scriptures.

2. King Hezekiah

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.*

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.

*3: **And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father did.***

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

*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.***

*6: **For he clave to the LORD, and departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, which the LORD commanded Moses.***

*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.***

3. The Desperate Situation

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.*

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.

*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.”*

Question: Why had ancient Israel been defeated and carried away captive to the land of Assyria?

Answer: *“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.”*

4. The Odds

Some seven years later **Sennacherib** king of Assyria attacked the kingdom of Judah. He overthrew many cities and arrived at the gates of Jerusalem where good king Hezekiah reigned. The odds were heavily stacked against Hezekiah. But worse still, his faith was going to be tested. **Who was he trusting in?** Even though he had obeyed God, he was about to face an example of subtle and twisted reasoning against him:

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...”*

*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?***

*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?*

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.

*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?”*

Here was insinuation at its most subtle. Moreover, the military odds against Hezekiah were terrifying! He was not able to find even **2,000** men who could ride horses; let alone fight with some **200,000** Assyrian cavalry and foot soldiers. Listen to this insulting challenge by Sennacherib's general **Rab-shakeh**:

Verses: 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.***

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?

*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.**”*

5. The Message to Isaiah

Humanly speaking, in military terms, there was absolutely nothing Hezekiah could do. As for Rab-shakeh's claim that God had commissioned him to take Jerusalem because Hezekiah had sought to put down idolatry in Judah; that was totally untrue. But it was a test of faith, Hezekiah's faith and Judah's faith. Hezekiah sent a delegation to the prophet **Isaiah**.

2 Kings 19: 1: *“And it came to pass, when king Hezekiah heard it, that he rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the LORD.*

*2: And he sent Eliakim, which was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, to **Isaiah** the prophet the son of Amoz.*

3: And they said unto him, Thus saith Hezekiah, **This day is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and blasphemy: for the children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth.**”

6. Hezekiah's Prayer

Hezekiah then went into the house of the LORD and prayed. Here is a copy of his prayer.

2 Kings 19: 15: **“And Hezekiah prayed before the LORD, and said, O LORD God of Israel, which dwellest between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth: thou hast made heaven and earth.**
16: LORD, bow down thine ear, and hear: open, LORD, thine eyes, and see: and hear the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent him to **reproach the living God.**
17: Of a truth, LORD, the kings of Assyria have destroyed the nations and their lands,
18: And have cast their gods into the fire: for they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone: therefore they have destroyed them.
19: Now therefore, O LORD our God, I beseech thee, save thou us out of his hand, **that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the LORD God, even thou only.**”

7. Yahweh's Answer

How would **Yahweh**, the Creator of the mighty universe respond to such a prayer? Here was a good king in desperate straits; praying not just for salvation, but that **Yahweh's honour** be vindicated throughout the world; and then throughout the universe! A short prayer - only **134 words!** A simple prayer; a child could understand it. A prayer you could pray in about a minute!

What would you do if you were in God's place? Would you stand aside and let Hezekiah be disgraced and then possibly slaughtered with his people? What would you do?

2 Kings 19: 20: **“Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah, saying, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, That which thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria I have heard.**
21: This is the word that the LORD hath spoken concerning him; **The virgin the daughter of Zion hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee.**
22: **Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? And against whom hast thou exalted thy voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? Even against the Holy One of Israel...**
27: But I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against me.
28: **Because** thy rage against me and thy tumult is come up into mine ears, therefore I will put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest.
29: And this shall be a sign unto thee, Ye shall eat this year such things as grow of themselves, and in the second year that which springeth of the same; and in the third year sow ye, and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat the fruits thereof.
30: And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall yet again take root downward, and bear fruit upward.
31: **For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape out of mount Zion: the zeal of the LORD of hosts shall do this.**
32: Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor cast a bank against it.
33: By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the LORD.
34: **For I will defend this city, to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake.**
35: **And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the LORD went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses.**
36: So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh.
37: And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword: and they escaped into the land of Armenia. And Esar-haddon his son reigned in his stead.”

8. Summary

1. **With God nothing is impossible.** Situations which appear absolutely insoluble to us are no problem to **Jehovah** the Almighty God of Israel.
2. **Faith** and **Obedience** are vital pre-requisites to answered prayer. Hezekiah obeyed the LORD and trusted Him completely. ***“For he clave to the LORD, and departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, which the LORD commanded Moses. And the LORD was with him; and he prospered whithersoever he went forth.”***
3. National sin inevitably leads to punishment: **War, famine, disease and a host of other problems.** That was the case with ancient Israel in the north. Israel had been defeated and carried away captive. Later the Assyrians attacked the southern kingdom of Judah where Hezekiah reigned, and they laid siege to the capital Jerusalem.
4. **The military odds against Judah were fearsome:** More than **100 to 1**. Worse still, was the Assyrian insinuation that it was God's intention that Jerusalem be captured; and that **Sennacherib** was, in fact, doing the Almighty's will. He said that God was punishing Hezekiah because he had dared to put an end to idolatry in Judah. It was an evil insinuation, one based on twisted reasoning and a total lie. ***“In whom art thou putting thy trust?”***
5. Hezekiah's Message to Isaiah. ***“This day is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and blasphemy: for the children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth.”*** The children (note the plural) have come to the birth and there is no strength to bring forth! As **‘children of God’** we have in very truth come to the birth **(to Messiah's soon-coming)** and we are so weak it doesn't bear talking about. Humanly speaking, the remnant church (the ecclesia of Yahweh) is small, weak and powerless. But ***nothing is impossible with God!*** Let us never forget that eternal fact.
6. **Hezekiah turns to the LORD.** He had no other option. He was bound to loose if he tried to stand up against the Assyrian army; even if Egypt came to his assistance. He had, to the best of his ability, lived a life of **faith** and **obedience**. But now he was weak and helpless. So with that insidious, blasphemous, lying insult ringing in his ears, he prayed a prayer to Jehovah which reads like a defence lawyer's plea for an innocent, helpless, condemned child. **Hezekiah begins with the facts.** Listen to them:
 - o He first calls to mind that for all Israel's national sins, **Yahweh is still the God of Israel;** and that **there is no other God like Him.** These are two unalterable facts.
 - o He then refers to the Almighty as the **Creator:** ***“Thou hast made heaven and earth.”*** That is another fact those who peddle the theory of **Evolution** must consider.
 - o Hezekiah then correctly analysis and dismisses the gods of all the nations as powerless, **man-made idols.** That is another fact all the people on the face of the earth should think about.
 - o Only then does king Hezekiah beseech the Almighty for His help; not just that Judah and Jerusalem be saved; but ***“that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the LORD God, even thou only.”***
 - o This is the true motive behind king Hezekiah's prayer. He's not praying just for personal salvation or glory; but ***“that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that Israel's God Yahweh is the One and only God in the entire universe!”***
 - o I may add, that in the arena of prayer, if you get your **facts** and your **motives** right, there is no telling what mighty results will be forthcoming!
7. **Yahweh's answer was swift and it came on two levels.**
 - o **First:** That the ***‘daughter of Zion’*** (the heavenly Jerusalem) was laughing at Satan's idle boast about overthrowing **Jehovah** and taking over the government of the universe. For, believe it or not, that is what Satan really wants. It is **Lucifer's** vain, futile and self-deluding dream to dethrone the LORD God of Israel! The fact is that God can handle Satan like a cattleman or horseman can control an angry animal. ***“I will put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips.”*** In other words: you can and will only do what I allow you to do; and I can control you with no trouble at all. For more details about Lucifer's aims, see **Satan the Devil.**

- o **Second:** The Almighty then made a **Jubile** forecast; which on the **agricultural level** meant that life-sustaining crops would spring up of their own accord to feed the people of Judah. But on the **spiritual level** Satan would see a **remnant church, the real Jubile crop**, escaping from his evil trap and going forth to bear **spiritual, life-sustaining nourishment for believers all over the globe!**

As proof of this, the bulk of the Assyrian army (**185,000 soldiers**) were slaughtered. This all happened as the LORD decreed. A few stunned and demoralized soldiers stumbled back to their country with their humiliated and probably speechless king **Sennacherib**. When they arrived back in **Nineveh** they were greeted with insult upon insult. The whole town turned out to see them. **“Where is my son, my husband, my father”** cried the women and children of Nineveh. It must have been a tragic sight! But even more tragic was the fact that **Sennacherib**, wilfully blind to the power of Israel's God, went into the house of his idol to worship!

The Bible says: *“And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of **Nisroch** his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword.”*

9. Conclusion

Dear friends: are you in an impossible situation; with the odds stacked heavily against you? No way out and absolutely no strength left. Then have faith in the **Holy One of Israel** and pray to Him; because **“nothing is impossible with God - nothing!”** For your part, you must put away sin as Hezekiah did; and place your trust in Jehovah. He is God. There is no other. Spread your case before Him. **List the facts. Cry for help. It will come.** God loves you and He wants to help you. He loves you more than you love yourself. The time has come. **We, the children have come to the birth.** Alas! there is no strength in the mother; and there is no strength in the children. **“But with God all things are possible!”**

Do you believe all This? Do You? It's a good start if you believe it; because it's true! That's right - it's true! It's as true as I am standing before you this Sabbath. It's as true as you are reading this from a piece of paper or over the Internet. It's true alright. But do you have the strength to believe it?

My Prayer: My prayer is that you will not only believe it; but that you will act upon it and, more importantly, that you will be a part of that prophesied '**Spiritual Jubile Crop**' which in these last days is scheduled to put its roots down and spring up to sustain the '**ecclesia of God!**'

AMEN!

In the Son's Name — For the Father's glory.
Elder: *Max W. Mader*

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