

already on p.44 that Sennacherib gives 200,150 as the number of people who were carried captive out of Judah. Similar numbers are often found in the Assyrian royal inscriptions at the time of the Assyrian empire. In the OT the accounts of Saul, David, and Solomon are full of numbers with fives and sixes in them. This does not lead us to decide that on this account they should entirely be put into the realm of fables. 185,000 does not mean any more in this connection than "very many". A similar judgment should be made regarding the time statement in the same night. This is a simple legend but does not mean that the whole account of the sudden rise of the epidemic in the Assyrian army is only a legend. The pestilence would be an understandable ground for the sudden departure of the Assyrians even if it only involved the death of a few thousand people in the course of several weeks.

The occurrence of severe pestilence (akkad. mutānu) is evidence for the eight century in the Assyrian Eponym Canon. On account of a mutānu the overthrow of the uprising in Gusana (i.e. Tell Halaf) must have had to be postponed from 759 to 758. As I have shown in Ug. Forschungen III/1971, the pestilence of 765 was the cause of the formation of the myth of the pestilence God Erra by the poet Kabtilani-Marduk in 764. It is very likely that the decreased activity of the Assyrian kings between 780 and 745 was caused to quite an extent by pestilences. There is nothing at all improbable in the occurrence of a pestilence in the Assyrian army facing Jerusalem and such a pestilence would be a very reasonable explanation of the sudden withdrawal of Sennacherib..

Here we remember the story contained in Book II 141 of Herodotus' work that Sennacherib's army was overrun at night by a great multitude of mice in the course of his attack against Egypt, and that these mice ate up the leather ~~XXXXXXXX~~ equipment and thus made the great part of the army helpless. W. Baumgartner has completely analyzed Herodotus' account in the essay mentioned on