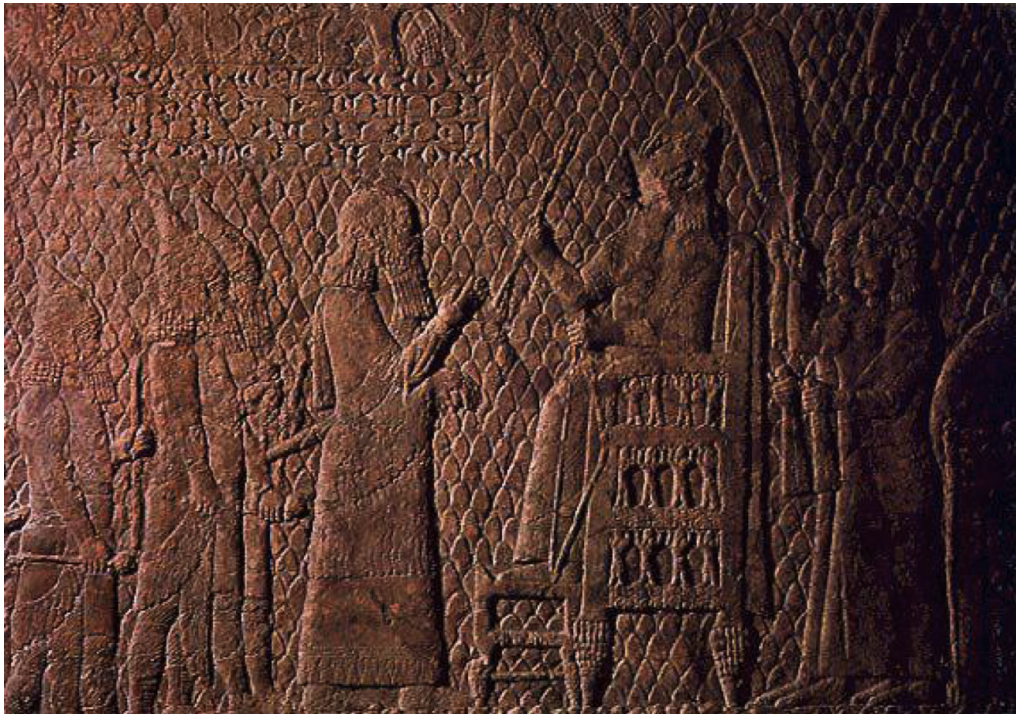


ISRAEL



Sennacherib sits on an elaborate throne in this detail of the eighth century B.C. relief from his royal palace at Nineveh. The figure heading a line of soldiers paying homage to the king may be Rabshekah, a victorious Assyrian commander (see 2 Kings 18). Above their heads is an inscription boasting, "Sennacherib, king of the world, king of Assyria, sat upon a nimeu-throne and passed in review the booty (taken) from Lachish."

Sacred trees in ancient art: In antiquity, sacred trees, or asheroth, were associated with cult places throughout the Near East, from Egypt to Mesopotamia and Syria-Palestine. A sacred tree stands taller than King Esarhaddon in the upper register of this black basalt stele. To the right of the tree is a bull and to the left of the ruler is an altar at which the king worships. A seed plow in the lower register is flanked on the right by a date palm tree and on the left by an object that may be a hill or a stylized ear of grain. This stele dates from the reign of Esarhaddon, Sennacherib's son, who ruled Assyria and Babylonia from 680 to 669 B.C.



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