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### The Early History of the Aramaeans and Their Contacts with Israel up to the Divided Kingdom

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**The Early History of the Aramaeans and  
Their Contacts with Israel up to the Divided Kingdom**

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**A Thesis Presented to  
the Faculty of Concordia Seminary  
Department of Old Testament History**

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**In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Bachelor of Divinity**

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**By  
Marlin A. Mentz  
May, 1947**

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## Introduction

Of the Old Testament races and peoples, who had contacts with God's chosen people, the Aramaeans, or as the English Bible terms them, Syrians, are one of the most colorful and fascinating. This is especially true because the history and career of the Aramaean people runs nearly parallel with that of the Israelites. They both appear on the scene at approximately the same time, and the history of both Aram and Israel also terminates about the same time.

The word Syria, as we know it, has no counterpart in Old Testament Hebrew. The translators of the Septuagint were probably the first to use the word Syria for the Hebrew word Aram. In such Old Testament passages as Jud. 10:6, I Ki. 20:1, II Ki. 5:1, I Chron. 18:6, Is. 7:1 and a host of others the Hebrew has  $\square \text{ } \text{ז} \text{ } \text{ס}$ .

There has been much discussion as to the origin of the name Syria. It seems that scholars are about equally divided on the matter. The first group would derive the name Syria from the Babylonian "Suri." Benzinger writes, "The name 'Syrians' has recently been derived by Winckler from the 'Suri' mentioned in the cuneiform inscription as a Babylonian designation for 'the West'" <sup>1</sup>

A second group favors the derivation from  $\text{ז} \text{ } \text{ס}$ . This

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1. Immanuel Benzinger, "Syria," The Jewish Encyclopedia, XI, p. 647.

school is supported by Stanley, Eadie, and McClintock and Strong. "The Greek form of the name derived from Tsur would be Tsuria; but as this could not be expressed by Greek letters, it was softened down  $\Sigma \upsilon \rho \acute{\iota} \alpha$  ." <sup>2</sup>

The last school believes that Syria is an abbreviated form of Assyria. This view is held by Smith, A Standard Bible Dictionary, Finegan, and The Westminster Dictionary of the Bible. J.F. McCurdy writes, "According to the common view the word is a contraction of Assyria and was employed by the Greeks of Asia Minor to designate the neighboring peoples of the Assyrian Empire." <sup>3</sup> This view seems to be the more plausible.

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2. McClintock and Strong, "Syria," Encyclopaedia Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature, X, pp. 95-103.

3. J.F. McCurdy, "Aram," A Standard Bible Dictionary, pp. 46-47.

## Chapter I

### Early History of Aram and the Patriarchal Period.

#### A. Sources of Information.

The sources of information, which the historians of the Aramaeans have used, are twofold. The first is Holy Scriptures. Much reliable information concerning this people is garnered from Holy Writ. In the Bible they are merely referred to as the Syrians, sometimes however, they are more closely identified by the region where they settled, e.g., "Syrians of Behrehob, and the Syrians of Zobah." <sup>1</sup> Kraeling and others put very little stock in the Old Testament sources because of their so-called "inaccuracies." <sup>2</sup> However, he does say that from the time of Omri on they are fairly reliable.

The second source of information is the inscriptions of Babylonia, Egypt, Assyria, Greece, Sam'al, and Hamath. From the inscriptions of Nippur and Lagash (third millenium B.C.) and the letters of the Hammurapi Dynasty we are able to get some light. <sup>3</sup> The Assyrian annals and inscriptions also provide us with some definite information, especially the eponyms of the kings. Sayce says, "In the Assyrian

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1. II. Sam. 10:6

2. "On the other hand, however, their religious bias often, as in the case of Ahab, prevented them from giving a correct estimate of personalities." Kraeling, Aram and Israel, p. 4.

3. Ibid., p.3.

inscriptions the name appears as Aramu, Arumu, and Arimu, as well as Aram. In a text of Tiglath-Pileser I (B.C. 1100) the waters on the east side of the Euphrates and westward of Harran are termed mami mat Arma, 'the waters of the land of the Aramaeans.'" <sup>4</sup> Regarding the reign of Ashurnazirpal III (883-823) Sayce writes, "that he restored to Assyria certain cities which a former Assyrian king had fortified in the land of Nahri, towards the sources of the Tigris and Euphrates, and of which the 'Arumu' had taken possession. Among the Aramaean princes whom he subdued here were Ammi-baal and Bur-Hadad, i.e., Bar-Hadad, or Ben-Hadad." <sup>5</sup> Concerning the name Aramaean in Assyrian inscriptions, he adds, "They (The Aramaeans) are the Arumu, Aramu, and Arma of the Assyrian monuments. Some of them, like the Fuqudu, or Pekod (Jer. 50:21), were even settled in Babylonia." <sup>6</sup> They are also mentioned in the inscriptions of Sargon, Sennacherib, and others.

Sayce also claims the Aramaeans were known to the Egyptians. "Thus we find bearded Aramaeans among the beardless Hittite enemies of the Egyptian king and in the great hall of Karnak portraits are given of the Rutennu of Northern Syria which are manifestly those of Hittite prisoners." <sup>7</sup>

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4. A.H.Sayce, "Aram, Aramaeans," Dictionary of the Bible, I, pp. 138-139.

5. Ibid., I, p. 138

6. A.H.Sayce, The Races of the Old Testament, pp. 99, 100.

7. Ibid., p. 194.

Kraeling is of the opinion that perhaps the "Eremboi" of the Odyssey (4,84) and the "Arimoi" of the Iliad (2,782), "may represent our Aramaeans, for it is not at all unlikely that the echo of the gigantic Aramaean onset should have reached the ears of the Homeric bards on the shores of Hellas." <sup>8</sup> W.Volck is of the same opinion. <sup>9</sup>

In his book Kraeling points out that we also have some Aramaic source-material - the inscriptions of the kings of Sam'al (Kilammu - an Aramaean, but wrote in Phoenician - Panammu and Bar-Rekab, eighth cent. of Senjirli). Then there is the inscription or stele of Zakir, king of Hamath on the Orontes. <sup>10</sup>

In spite of the Biblical material and information from the inscriptions, obelisks, and steles we must agree with Kraeling when he writes,

The history of the Aramaeans cannot yet be written. Through the gloom that enshrouds their destinies our sources only now and then cast a fitful glimmer. We possess merely flashlight pictures, taken here and there, and preserved in papyri or engraved on stone or written on clay. These the chronicler must piece together; they must speak to him and reveal the heartbeats of the race and enable him to paint his subject in colors true to life. Of the Aramaeans we know just enough to give an impressionistic design of who they were and what befell them. <sup>11</sup>

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8. Kraeling, op. cit., p. 5.

9. W.Volck, "Aram, Aramaeans, and the Aramaic Language," The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, I, pp. 254, 255.

10. Kraeling, op. cit., p.2

11. Ibid., pp. 1,2.

B. The Early History of the Aramaeans.

1. The Ancestor of the Aramaeans.

Kraeling claims that the earliest beginnings of the Aramaean race are "shrouded in obscurity."<sup>12</sup> To a certain extent he is right, but not to the extent that we are completely ignorant as to the ancestor of the Aramaean race. In Gen. 10:23 Aram is designated as the progenitor of the Aramaean race.<sup>13</sup> The descendants of Aram are called "the children of Aram." Since Aram was a descendant of Shem, it then follows that "the children of Aram" (the Aramaeans) are Semites. "The children of Shem, Elam, and Asshur, and Arphaxad, and Lud, and Aram and the children of Aram; Uz and Hul, and Gether and Mash."<sup>14</sup>

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12. Kraeling, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

13. Some scholars say that the name Aramaean has its origin in the Hebrew word ארם (table land or high plain) which name the Hebrews then assigned to the Syrian plateau about Damascus. Kraeling writes, "The word 'Aramu' has been interpreted as meaning 'highlanders' from the Negd. But we have seen that this people did not bear this name until they had settled in the Tur 'Abdin region. Consequently we must prefer to call them 'highlanders' of the upper Tigris and Euphrates. Since they had constant contact in that region with the Hittites, and since the latter at the time held dominion over Syria, it is possible that the name 'Aramaean' was transmitted southward thru their agency. Hence we find those groups of the Ahlame which penetrated Syria after the Hittite debacle called by this appellation. Perhaps also the alternative translation of Aramu as 'the exalted ones' was foremost in the consciousness of the Ahlame when they gave up their more ancient name in favor of the new." Kraeling, *op. cit.*, p. 22. It seems that both views apply and merit acceptance.

14. Gen. 10:22,23.

On this passage the writer in McClintock and Strong comments, "The descent of the Aramaeans from a son of Shem is confirmed by their language, which was one of the branches of the Semitic family, and nearly allied to the Hebrew." <sup>15</sup> In a similar vein writes another author, "The descent of the Aramaeans from Aram is confirmed by their language, which was one of the branches of the Semitic family, and very nearly allied to the Hebrew." <sup>16</sup>

Yet from the pen of higher criticism comes this protest that the Aram mentioned in Gen. 10:23 is not to be reckoned as a person but should stand for a whole tribe. Thus writes the author in Encyclopaedia Biblica,

Aram appears in Gen. 10:22 ( *Αραμωv* [A] ) as one of the sons of Shem. This in itself does not prove anything as to the nationality and language of the people in question, for the classification adopted in the chapter is based, to a large extent, on geographical and political considerations. But there is no reason to doubt that Aram here stands for the whole, or at least for a portion, of those 'Semitic' tribes whose language is called 'Aramaic' in the Old Testament (Ezra 4:7, Dan. 2:4) and is placed in the mouth of Laban the Aramaean according to the ancient gloss in Gen. 31:47. In later times the name was still known, though often supplanted by 'Syrian,' which the Greeks employed, from a very early period, as the equivalent of the native Aram and its derivatives. Aram may perhaps be the source of the Homeric 'Eremboi' (Od. 4, 84). <sup>17</sup>

However, even Dr. Emil Kraeling has this to say in defense of the view that the Aramaeans are a people and not the

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15. McClintock and Strong, "Aram," op. cit., I, pp. 353-354.

16. Rt. Rev. Samuel Fallows, "Aram" The Popular and Critical Bible Encyclopedia, I, pp. 137-138.

17. Theodor Nöldeke, "Aram," Encyclopedia Biblica, I, cols. 276-280.

"name of a region." "The earliest occurrences of it show that it is not the name of a region but of a people. The people is called Arimoi, Aramu, Arumu; the second form is the most frequent and doubtless the original one, since the others represent merely vowel harmonizations to the ending. (ZA 27: 283)."<sup>18</sup>

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18. Kraeling, op. cit., p. 21.

## 2. The Origin or the Homeland of the Aramaeans.

The question as to the original homeland of the Aramaeans has proved universally perplexing to scholars. Because of the dearth of material modern scholarship is not too well equipped for the task of identifying the homeland of the Aramaeans. The Bible sheds some light on this question. Amos 9:7 reads as follows, "... Have not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt? and the Philistines from Caphtor and the Syrians (Aramaeans) from Kir?" Most commentators are of the opinion that Kir is here spoken of as the original habitat of the Aramaeans (Keil,<sup>19</sup> Södergren, and others). However, the writer in McClintock and Strong makes this suggestion,

Many writers, who have copied without acknowledgement the words of Calmet, maintain that the Aramaeans came from Kir, appealing to Amos 9:7; but while that passage is not free from obscurity, it seems evidently to point, not to the aboriginal abode of the people, but to the country whence God would recover them when banished. The prophet had said (Amos 1:5) that the people of Aram would go into captivity to Kir (probably the country of the River Kur or Cyrus,) a prediction of which we read the accomplishment in II Kings 16:9; and the allusion here is to their subsequent restoration. 20

Assuming that Kir in the above passage refers to the original home of the Aramaeans, we are confronted

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19. "For degenerate Israel, the leading up out of Egypt had no higher significance than the leading up of the Philistines and Syrians out of their former dwelling-places into the land which they at present inhabited."

C.F.Keil, Commentary on the Minor Prophets, I, p. 327.

20. McClintock and Strong, "Aram," op. cit., I, p. 354.

with the further problem of locating this Kir, mentioned also in Amos 1:5, and II Kings 16:9. Four possible locations are proposed. One school attempts to locate the land of Kir near the river Kur, the country today known as Iberia.<sup>21</sup> This view, first propounded by J.D. Michaelis,<sup>22</sup> found favor with the Commentator Pusey. Others concurring with Pusey are Keil, Pulpit Commentary, International Critical Commentary, and Lange-Schaff. Thus a large number favor Kir as the region around the Kur River. Keil writes, "The best of the population of Aram would be carried away to Kir, i.e., to the banks of the river Kur, from which according to 9:7 the Syrians originally emigrated."<sup>23</sup> The Pulpit Commentary adds its weight to that of Keil when it says, "It (Kir) has been identified with the country on the banks of the River Kur which flows into the Araxes on the southwest of the Caspian Sea. It forms part of the territory known as Transcaucasia."<sup>24</sup> Lange Schaff says, "The rest are to be carried away to Kir, an Assyrian province, on the banks of the River Kir, *Kūpos*, the modern Georgia."<sup>25</sup>

Others like Barton and Paton do not endeavor to equate Kir to any specific region but are satisfied to state the

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21. "The ancient name of a district of Asia, between the Euxine and Caspian seas. It now forms part of Soviet Georgia." "Iberia," Americana, XIV, p. 615.

22. A. Jeremias, "Kir," The New Schaff-Herzog-Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, VI, p. 344.

23. op. cit., I, pp. 244-245.

24. W.J. Deane, "Amos," Pulpit Commentary, XXXI, p. 3.

25. Philip Schaff, "The Minor Prophets," Lange-Schaff, A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures.

general fact that they hail from Arabia. Paton believes, "In view of the nomadic habits of those tribes, as well as of the fact that the Babylonian and Assyrian records represent the Syrian desert as their home, there can be no doubt that like all the other Semites, they were emigrants from Arabia." <sup>26</sup>

Then the home-land of the Aramaeans is sought by some in Armenia, a view which has not gained much favor. Krae-ling holds that "All attempts at locating the Semite cradle in Armenia fail because of the presence there of Turanian races in extremely early days; for the original habitat of Semite and Turanian must have lain far apart." <sup>27</sup>

Finally there is the school represented by Södergren, Krae-ling, Cambridge Ancient History, Encyclopaedia Americana, and Westminster Dictionary. They recognize Kir as the plain between the Tigris and the highlands of Elam. <sup>28</sup> The author in the Cambridge Ancient History, writes, "But Kir, the traditional home of the Aramaeans (Amos 9:7), was apparently near Elam, and may have been merely another name of Ur the modern identification of which (el-Ikay-yar) may possibly preserve an echo of Kir itself." <sup>29</sup> The Westminster Dictionary has this comment, "While its loca-

<sup>26</sup>. L.B.Paton, The Early History of Syria and Palestine, p. 113.

<sup>27</sup>. Krae-ling, op. cit., p. 11.

<sup>28</sup>. Incidentally it is not all improbable and impossible that this plain of Kir could have been translated by the Hebrew  $\text{קִיר}$ , and hence the name Aramaeans.

<sup>29</sup>. S.A.Cook, Chap. V, "The Semites," The Cambridge Ancient History, I, p. 234.

tion is very uncertain, it may probably be identified with the plain between the Tigris and highland of Elam." <sup>30</sup> The Kir same as Kur theory is rejected for the following reasons: It(Kir) is mentioned in II Kings 16:9, Isaiah 22:6, Amos 9:7, and Amos 1:5. "as with the Assyrian region." A. Jeremian writes, "But the Assyrian Kingdom never included this region.... The correct position is given by Winckler as the plain Jatbur, between the Tigris and the mountains, and bordering Elam." <sup>31</sup>... Barton writes, "In reality nothing certain is known of the location of Kir." But he adds this pertinent observation that in Is. 22:6 Kir is mentioned in connection with Elam as furnishing troops for the Assyrian army. <sup>32</sup> Kraeling adds, "That the Aramaeans came from Chaldaea is the view also of Amos 9:7, ..... Where is Kir? We are led to believe by Is. 22:6, where it is brought into relation with Elam, to seek it in Southern Babylonia. If we dare place any reliance on II Kings 16:9, which, it seems to me is an intentional reference to Amos 1:5, we can recall the fact that Tiglath-Pileser actually did deport captives to the region of the lower Tigris (ATU 104, 178)." <sup>33</sup> The view that Kir was located near Elam seems to have most of the evidence in its favor.

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30. John Davis, Westminster Dictionary of the Bible, p. 45.

31. A. Jeremias, "Kir," op. cit., VI p. 344.

32. George A. Barton, "Kir," Dictionary of the Bible, 1914, p. 522.

33. Kraeling, op. cit., p. 16.

### 3. The Aramaean Migrations.

Just when the Aramaeans started to immigrate to the territory in which we later find them is not known. It seems that their migrations began in the third millenium. First there were tiny streams which then resulted in mighty swollen rivers of humanity. Paton gives the date of 2230 B.C. for these first wanderings of the Aramaeans. "We know however, from recent archaeological discovery that the Aramaean migration did occur as early as 2230 B.C., the date to which Abram must be assigned by his synchronism with Khammurabi." <sup>34</sup> But it is generally agreed that the Aramaean migration reached its full strength between the years 1500-1300 B.C. Paton claims it was at its height at 1500 B.C. <sup>35</sup> Barton claims that records of the Aramaean migrations are preserved for us in the inscriptions of Shalmaneser I of Assyria and Rameses II of Egypt. <sup>36</sup> McCurdy in A Standard Bible Dictionary sheds some light on the time by saying, "Yet they were also found in large numbers as a pastoral people on both sides of the Tigris till the latest Babylonian times. West of the Euphrates

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<sup>34</sup>. Paton, op. cit., p. 39. In giving this date as an approximation of the Aramaean migration, it would be well to bear in mind that Paton's conception of the term, Aramaean, embraces more than just what we understand by the term Aramaean. In using it in the wider sense it includes Edomites, Moabites, and others.---- Today scholars fix the time of Khammurabi much later, ca. 1800 B.C.

<sup>35</sup>. Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>36</sup>. Geo. A Barton, Archaeology and the Bible, p. 113.

they do not appear in force till after the twelfth century B.C." <sup>37</sup> The Americana agrees with Paton as to the date. "It now is generally held that the Aramaeans moved from northeast Arabia into Syria, Mesopotamia, Assyria, Babylonia, and beyond the Tigris, 1500 B.C." <sup>38</sup>

The Aramaeans moved up along the Euphrates and its tributaries. They overran the Babylonian and Chaldaean plains penetrating northern Mesopotamia. By ca. 1350 B.C. they had gone as far as Haran and as far as Charchemish and then over into Damascus and up to Zobah as far as Hamath on the Orontes. <sup>39</sup>

What factors influenced the Aramaeans to leave their homeland? There are three factors which caused their migrations. In the first place, the Aramaeans were living at a time when it seems that the nations and peoples of antiquity were in a state of flux. It appears that the peoples had not found the homeland fitted for their racial characteristics and their economic interests. In the second place, some of the districts were over populated. Pressure was thereby exerted on the less powerful and less numerous peoples to move. Lastly, the Amorite empire had decayed and could no longer put up the resistance needed to stem the oncoming Aramaean tide. A factor that hastened

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37. J.F. McCurdy, "Aram," op. cit., pp. 46-47.

38. "Aramaeans," op. cit., II, p. 132.

39. Kraeling, op. cit., pp. 18-19. On these pages Kraeling presents his arguments in favor of the above date.

the Amorite disintegration was the Hittite invasion from the north. Thus it is not too unnatural that we find the Aramaeans on the move.

#### 4. Their Settlements in Aram-Naharaim.

In the preceding chapter reference has been made to some of the settlements of the Aramaeans.<sup>40</sup> The first major stop of the Aramaeans was at Ur. Scattered everywhere on the Chaldaean plain were small groups of Aramaean settlements. As they travelled up the Euphrates, they established such cities as Hindan and Tirq-Sirqu, just below the confluence of the Habur and Euphrates. Leaving the Euphrates at this point a large group of the Aramaeans made their way up the Habur and its tributaries and settled in the old Amorite town of Haran. Haran became the great center of Aramaean culture in that part of the Aramaean empire or world known to the Greeks as Mesopotamia and to the Hebrews as Aram-Naharaim (Aram of the Two Rivers).

It is almost universally accepted that Naharaim is a dual. However, even this general interpretation is contested. The Encyclopaedia Biblica says that the term Naharaim as a "dual (the two rivers) is extremely doubtful."<sup>41</sup> Meyer, Mueller, and Moore concur with Barton in the opinion that "the Hebrew dual is fictitious. If plural, it was no doubt the country called by the Egyptian 'Nahrin' an Aramaic name, meaning the land of the rivers.

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<sup>40</sup>. cf. p. 14.

<sup>41</sup>. Hope W. Hogg, "Aram-Naharaim," Encyclopaedia Biblica, I, col. 287.

It embraced a considerable extent on both sides of the Euphrates, extending east as far as the Tigris and west to the Orontes, running south not only to Hamath, but to Kadesh." <sup>42</sup>

Nor have scholars and Old Testament students been able to agree on the location and extent of the territory designated in Hebrew as, Aram-Naharaim. It may be that this term is used in a general way. The writer in the Encyclopaedia Biblica says, "It need not, therefore, have been used with a very great definiteness (cf. the ancient names *Παλαια Νοταμία* Poly. v. 69; and the modern Riviera); and the inscriptions, in fact bear this out." <sup>43</sup> Eadie, <sup>44</sup> McCurdy, <sup>45</sup> and Simon Cohen <sup>46</sup> identify Aram-Naharaim with Mesopotamia or the land lying between the two great rivers, the Tigris and Euphrates. The author of the article on Aram-Naharaim in The Popular and Critical Bible Encyclopaedia is inclined to agree with the foregoing but adds a qualifying statement as to the extent of Aram-Naharaim. "The rivers which enclose Mesopotamia are the Euphrates on the west and the Tigris on the East; but it is doubtful whether the Aram-Naharaim of Scripture embraces

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<sup>42</sup>. George A. Barton, "Aram," The Jewish Encyclopaedia, II, pp. 64-66.

<sup>43</sup>. Hope W. Hogg, "Aram-Naharaim," op. cit., I, col. 287.

<sup>44</sup>. Biblical Encyclopaedia, p. 40.

<sup>45</sup>. J.F. McCurdy, "Aram," The Jewish Encyclopaedia, II, pp. 64-66.

<sup>46</sup>. Simon Cohen, "Aram," The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, I, 448-450.

the whole tract or only the northern portion of it.

(Comp. Gen. 24:10; Deut. 23:4; Judges 3:8)" 47

Within this school are also men like Mueller and McCurdy who believe in making Aram-Naharaim a large comprehensive district. The following quotation is representative of this group, "But though the district now enumerated be the only one expressly named in the Bible as belonging to Aram, there is no doubt that many more territories were included in that extensive region, e.g., Geshur, Arpad, Hul, Riblah, Tadmor, Hauran, Abilene, etc. though some of them may have formed part of the division already specified." 48

The Egyptian inscriptions do not help to solve the problem. On the monuments the word "Nahrina" is found. In the Tel el-Amarna tablets it appears as "Nahrina". Both terms are translated "land of the rivers." But since they are not further defined, the question remains what lands and what rivers are meant? Many scholars try to identify the Hebrew Aram-Naharaim with the "Nahrina" and "Nahrina". Others do not believe that these terms are synonymous. Adams, e.g., says,

It is obvious, however, that the expression refers to the two rivers, par excellence, the Euphrates and the Tigris. It is entirely possible, of course, that the Nahrina of the Egyptian texts referred primarily to the western Euphratean area 500 years after Abraham, but that does not prove that the Naharaim of the Old Testament patriarchal period was

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47. Samuel Fallows, "Aram," op. cit., I, p. 139

48. Ibid., pp. 137-138.

the same. Indeed it is likely that the Egyptians knew nothing about the Tigris. 49

Others hold that the rivers in question are not the Euphrates and Tigris. They believe that Aram-Naharaim comprised the land lying between the Balikh and Orontes rivers. This view has found favor with Kraeling, Maspero, Schrader, Macker, and others.

Another school "interprets Naharaim as a locative of the singular 'Aram on the Euphrates' and refers it to the region of the Osroene with Haran." 50 This view is favored by Meyer and Haupt.

McCurdy, advocates that Naharaim is the country "east of the middle of Euphrates as far as the river Habor." 51

The best, clearest, and most convincing discussion of the entire subject is found in the recent book by J. McKee Adams, Biblical Backgrounds. He presents the following considerations. From the story regarding the mission of Eliezer several points help to establish the identification of Aram-Naharaim, Gen. 24. Abraham sent Eliezer to his country, kindred, and his father's house Gen. 24: 4 and 40. "The location of these paternal connections is further identified as in Aram-Naharaim and in the city of Nahor." 52 Gen. 24:10, Gen. 11:31,32, and

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49. J. McKee Adams, Biblical Backgrounds, p. 46.

50. Kraeling, op. cit. p. 21.

51. J.F. McCurdy, "Aram," op. cit., pp. 46-47.

52. Adams, op. cit. p. 47.

Gen. 24:15 & 29 fix Haran as the future home of Terah and Nahor and fix it as the actual residence. Gen. 31:21 places the city of Haran east of the Euphrates, because of the Biblical statement, "And Jacob passed over the river, and set his face toward the Mount Gilead." Commenting on this passage Adams explains, "This can mean nothing except a western passage over the Euphrates."<sup>53</sup> Haran was located in Aram-Naharaim, on the eastern side of the Euphrates.

To the whole of this area as far as the Tigris we apply the term Northern Mesopotamia, meaning by that the Old Testament Aram-Naharaim with which it was practically co-extensive. The author of Judges supports this in the narrative describing Chushanrishathaim's relations with Israel when he uses Aram and Aram-Naharaim to refer to this Mesopotamian sector." 54

Jud. 3:8,10 tells us that Balaam hailed from this territory. (Num.22:5; 23:7. cf. Gen. 29:1; Hos. 12: 12.) Adams claims that the district was also known as Padan Aram. (Gen. 25:20; 28:6,7; 31:18; 35:9; 46:15.) His final conclusion is this, "The earliest allusions to Aram, Aram-Naharaim, or Padan Aram, refer primarily if not exclusively, to the upper Mesopotamian territory lying immediately south of the Taurus-- Masius mountains and extending for approximately two hundred miles to the Khabur river." <sup>55</sup> Whether Padan-Aram and Aram-Naharaim are synonymous terms will be discussed later.

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53. Ibid., p. 47.

54. Ibid., p. 47

55. Ibid., pp.47-48.

After settling at Haran many of the Aramaeans radiated in all directions. Pushing westward they overran the Hauran and the territory around Damascus. By the year 900 B.C. they had established themselves as sole rulers in Bit-Adini, (Behh-Eden), Geshir, Damascus, Hamath, Maachah, (Abel Beth-Maachah), Rehob, (Beth-Rehob,) Tob, Zobah. Their influence was also felt at such places as: Carchemish, Arpad, Hul, Gurgum, Que, and other districts.

Since there is some dispute as to the location and identification of some of these places, (Hamath, Zobah, etc.) a brief discussion will take place as they come into contact with the progenitors of Israel and the later history of the Twelve Tribes.

5. The Aramaean People - mode of living, religion, political organization, etc.

While it is true that comparatively little material is at hand on the religion and the social and political structure of the Aramaeans, some information can be gleaned.

It seems that from earliest times the Aramaeans were made up of a number of tribes. Prominent among the tribes were the Ahlame, the Suti, and the Kalde. Kraeling reckons the Suti as "the vanguard" of the Aramaean tribes. About the fourteenth century the Ahlame outstripped the Suti in importance and strength. It is believed that the Ahlame were assimilated and that the "same root (Ahlame) appears also in the name Hilimmu, a later Aramaean tribe. (MVAG XI 226)" <sup>56</sup> The Kalde settled along the lower Euphrates and were later known as the Chaldaeans. Ethnically the Ahlame, the Suti, and the Kalde were related.

It seems that the Aramaeans in their early history were not very well organized politically. According to an inscription of Tiglath-Pileser III and an inscription of Sennacherib (705-681) there were dwelling in and about the royal cities, Aramaean tribes who were nomadic or semi-nomadic. <sup>57</sup> If it is true that some were nomads at that late date, it can be inferred that most of the

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56. Kraeling, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

57. Theodor Nöldeke, "Aram," *op. cit.*, I, cols. 276-280.

early tribes were principally nomads.

A number of years ago some inscriptions were found which describe an Assyrian census of the seventh century. A part of this census is devoted to the territory in and around Haran. We can use it to describe the Haran of preceding centuries, since it is likely that they never rebelled against Assyria<sup>58</sup> and most likely there were similar conditions at the time of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. According to these inscriptions, Haran was a principality with several smaller governmental units called "qani." (cf. our townships.) Clustered about Haran was a group of villages and towns. The appearances are that early Aramaeans brought with them primitive Arabian customs, among which was the patriarchate.

When the Aramaean center of culture was transferred from Haran to Damascus, we find that a number of strong Aramaean kingdoms had developed. There were the kingdoms of Hamath, Sam'al, Bit Adini, Zobah, and Damascus, the latter being by far the largest and most powerful. The writer in the Encyclopaedia Biblica makes this pertinent observation,

Though at several periods the whole, or the greater part, of the Aramaean nation has been subject to a single foreign power, the Aramaeans have never formed an independent political unity; in fact, so far as we know there has never existed a state comprehending the Aramaeans of the main part of Syria or of Meso-

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58. Kraeling says, "But the fact that the Aramaeans were never disturbed in Harran after the time of Tiglath-pileser I as in regions further west, for the simple reason that they never rebelled against Assyria, leads us to believe that the conditions of later days correspond fairly to those of the patriarchal period." op. cit., p.25.

potamia proper, to the exclusion of other races." 59

From earliest times the Aramaeans were a nomadic people. But as they settled down, they became an agricultural people. That fact is borne out in the Haran census. The census contains a number of counts such as the count of the vineyards, herds of sheep, goats, and camels. The farms were also reckoned. However, the later Aramaeans were not principally farmers, but were merchants and were very active as traders, especially the Aramaeans of Damascus and environs. Damascus was very fortunately situated for trade, since many of the caravan routes of that day had to pass thru Damascus going from the Mediterranean Sea to Babylon, Nineveh, and other great metropolises of the then known world.

The Aramaeans were not an irreligious people, for their own and other inscriptions reveal that they had quite a catalogue of gods. Their deities bear a great resemblance to those of the Babylonians. The chief god of the Aramaeans was Hadad, the Storm-god, (also known as Adad and Addu). Hadad "can always be recognized by the fact that he is represented with the bull or that he is mentioned along with his consort Atargatis." 60 Atargatis is a compound of the goddess Atar with the Syrian Ati. "She was represented with her head surrounded with

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59. Theodor Nöldeke, "Aram," *op. cit.*, I, cols. 276-280.

60. Frederic Macler, "Syrians," *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, III, pp. 164-167.

rays. The symbol of Atargatis was composed of the crescent moon in conjuncture with the solar disk." <sup>61</sup> Their principal seat was Heliopolis and then Damascus. The farmers were want to worship Hadad as the "protector god of the harvest." <sup>62</sup> Bar-Hadad with his father and mother form a triad known as the "dii Syria." Of this Hadad cult Macler writes, "In time his cult became confused with that of the sun; his head was thus ornamented with rays; this identification is particularly noticeable in Heliopolis (Baalbek), where the cult of Hadad and that of the sun are one and the same." <sup>63</sup> The Hadad cult extended as far north as Senjirli where in 800 B.C. a statue was found dedicated to Hadad by King Panammu with an Aramaean inscription. Among the many minor gods of the Aramaeans were Rimmon of II Ki. 5:18, the air-god (who also went by the name of Hadad-Rimmon Zech. 12:11 and was related to the Assyrian god Ramman), Resheph, the first god, El, Shamas, Or, Rekebel (or Rekub-el "which may possibly denote the 'chariot of El.' "). <sup>64</sup> The kings of Damascus and Zobah bore theophorous names viz., Ben-Hadad I, II, Tabrimmon, and Hazael.

But at Haran a different cult was predominant, that of the moon-god Sin (Assyrian Moon-god) which was also very prominent at Ur, the original home of Abraham. It seems that for some reason the moon-god Sin never gained a great following outside of Haran as such.

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61. *Ibid.*, XII, p. 165.

62. *Ibid.*, XII, p. 165.

63. *Ibid.*, XII, p. 165.

64. A.H.Sayce, "Aram, Aramaeans," *op. cit.*, I, pp. 138, 139.

### C. The Aramaean Contacts with the Patriarchs.

#### 1. Abraham's Sojourn at Haran.

In Gen. 11: 31-12:5 we are told that Abraham sojourned at Haran in Aram-Naharaim on his way to Canaan. Haran (also called Charan) is a very ancient city possibly as old as Damascus. At any rate it can be seen from Gen. 11:31, that Haran was a well-established city at the time of Abraham's migration. Some have held that Haran derived its name from Haran the brother of Abraham and Nahor. But this would hardly be the case because Haran had already died in Ur of the Chaldees. Barton is of the opinion that Haran was possibly an ancient Mitannian city, since the Mitannian empire was known to have extended that far at one time. <sup>65</sup> The word Haran as Adams points out "signifies 'road' in the old language of Chaldaea, and for many ages the armies and merchants of Babylonia had halted there when making their way towards the Mediterranean." <sup>66</sup> As to Haran's antiquity and influence I would like to cite a quotation from the Universal Jewish Encyclopaedia, "Haran was an ancient and important commercial city, with a history extending back at least as far as 2,000 B.C.E., where it is mentioned in Assyrian documents from Cappadocia." <sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup>. George A. Barton, Archaeology and the Bible, p.77

<sup>66</sup>. Ibid., p.45.

<sup>67</sup>. Isaac Landman, editor "Haran", op. cit., V, p. 213.

The Haran census, described in the preceding chapter, gave us an approximate picture of life at that time, In Gen. 24:10 Haran is referred to as "the city of Nahor." Bethuel and Laban also resided there.

In connection with Abraham's stay in Haran, this question might arise, "Was Abraham himself an Aramaean?" Without a doubt Abraham was of Aramaean extraction. Adams says, "The Old Testament evidences supported by the independency of secular literature, justifies us in holding that there was such a person, (Abraham) that he was an Aramaean or Amorite." <sup>68</sup> It is true that nowhere in the Bible is Abraham called an Aramaean, <sup>69</sup> but in Gen. 25; 20 we read, "And Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah to wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian(Aramaean)." In the passage quoted Abraham's close relatives are called Aramaeans. Then in Gen. 24:4 Abraham refers to Aram-Naharaim as his country and to his relatives as his kindred. In Gen. 12:1 Abraham was told to emigrate from his country, kindred, and father's house. From these passages cited it appears possible to draw the conclusion that Abraham was an Aramaean and not an Amorite. Nowhere in the Bible is Abraham's family identified as being Amorites. G.D. Malech commends Abraham's Aramaic lineage.

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68. J. McKee Adams, Ancient Records and the Bible, p.220.

69. A possible reason for this could be found in this remark by Kraeling, "We must assume therefore that Abraham migrated from Haran to Palestine before the name (Aramaean) became applied to the group to which he belonged." op. cit., p. 32.

"Abraham, the patriarch, is a descendant of Arphaxad, He went from Ur in Chaldaea, and he and his father are called Aramaeans in the First Book of Moses, chap. 25,20." 70 Paton likewise approves this conclusion. "Although the Hebrews spoke the language of Canaan they regarded themselves, not as kindred of Canaanites and Amorites, but as Aramaeans. In the liturgy of Deut. 26:5 the Israelite is instructed to say, 'An Aramaean ready to perish was my father,' and Gen. 25:20; 28:5 et. al., Bethuel and Laban, the Aramaean, are called kinsmen of the Patriarchs." 71

Abraham likewise is called an Hebrew in the Old Testament. This name is explained by the fact that Gen. 11: 11-25 recounts among the ancestors of Abraham one named Eber. On the name Eber, Leupold writes, "Eber may mean 'the man from across,' i.e., the river Euphrates. Such a meaning may quite naturally attach itself to a man..." 72 Eber is again mentioned in Gen. 10:21. Regarding this passage Leupold says, "For 'Eber' as a term primarily means across or the region across the Euphrates River, for it was from this place that 'Eber' himself came (thence his name)...." 73 The majority of the commentaries 74 agree with Leupold that Eber means "the man from the across the river." In order to distinguish themselves the sons

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70. G.D. Malech, History of the Syrian Nation, p.33

71. Paton, op. cit., p. 39.

72. Leupold, Exposition of Genesis, p. 396.

73. Ibid, p. 375.

74. Pulpit Commentary, Driver, Delitzsch, and Kretzmann.

of Eber or the surrounding peoples referred to them as

אֲבֵרָה ("The ones from across the river."). Therefore Abraham being a descendant of Eber is called an אֲבֵרָה or "The Immigrant." The Septuagint has *μεμεικτος* .

The migration of Terah from Ur in southern Babylonia to Haran occurred about 2116 B.C. <sup>75</sup> No doubt the stop at Haran was due to Terah's advanced age, 205 years old when he died. In Gen. 12 God's command comes again to Abraham to depart with Lot for the land of Canaan. It is not so difficult to ascertain why God ordered Abraham and Lot to leave Haran, if we remember that the city of Haran was the seat of the cult of the moon god Sin worshipped by the Aramaeans. Abraham and Lot journeyed to Canaan and settled upon the plain of Moreh near Sichem (Shechem) in Samaria.

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75. J. McKee Adams gives this date in his recent book, Ancient Records and the Bible, p. 175.

## 2. Abraham obtains a wife for Isaac

The next Aramaean contact during the Patriarchal period occurred after the death of Sarah when Abraham sent Eliezer, his major domo, to Haran for the purpose of securing a wife for Isaac. Gen. 24: 1-67.) Some doubt is cast upon the assertion that Eliezer was the servant sent. Leupold and Driver believe that he was too old for such a task, since he was last mentioned in Gen. 15:2 and upwards of fifty years had elapsed since that time plus the number of years it took for him to rise to such a position of trust. But Lange-Schaff in citing Calmer's Handbuch say that Eliezer "is intended, because otherwise the servant would be named in so important a mission, and this inference is just." <sup>76</sup> The Pulpit Commentary, Kretzmann, and Delitzsch agree.

In Gen. 15:2 Eliezer is termed "Eliezer of Damascus." This also has caused much discussion. The question is did he or did he not hail from Damascus? Some modern critics believe the phrase too hopelessly corrupt. Thomson writes, "Greater interest attaches to Gen. 15:2 where Abraham complains that he is childless and that his heir is 'Dammesek Eliezer' (EKV), for which the Syriac version reads 'Eliezer the Dammaschul.' The clause however, is hopelessly obscure, and it is doubtful whether it contains any reference to Damascus at all." <sup>77</sup> Leupold and

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<sup>76</sup>. John Peter Lange, Genesis, I, p. 483.

R.C.A. Macalister believe it should be translated as "Eliezer the Damascene." The latter view is the preferable one. The Septuagint has *ὁὶὸς ἠδβέ'κ*.

Damascus is first mentioned in the 14th chapter of Genesis in connection with the battle of the four kings against the five, (ca. 2100 B.C.) then again in Gen. 15:2. From these early references one gains the impression that about 2100 B.C. Damascus is a well-established and well-known city. We have very little knowledge of her early history. There are several traditions prevalent as to the founder of Damascus. "Josephus (Ant. I, vi, 6) says it was founded by Uz, grandson of Shem." "A Moslem tradition makes Eliezer the founder of the city, and Abraham king for some years before he went south to Palestine." <sup>78</sup> There is also a tradition which makes Abraham the founder.

G. Maspero believes that Damascus was first occupied by the Amorites and then in about the twelfth century the Aramaeans made themselves masters of the famous city. <sup>79</sup> McCurdy also agrees that Damascus was doubtless an "Amorite trading post in the old days of Babylonian supremacy." <sup>80</sup>

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77. C.H.Thomson, "Damascus," The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, II, pp. 778-780. also Andrew C. Zenos, "Damascus," A Standard Bible Dictionary, pp. 165-166.

78. W. Ewing, "Damascus," Dictionary of the Bible, I, pp. 545-548.

79. G. Maspero, The Struggle of the Nations, Egypt, Syria, and Assyria, pp. 777-779.

80. J.F.McCurdy, "Aram, Arameans, The Aramaic Language," The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopaedia, of Religious Knowledge, I, pp. 255-256.

Can the claim that Damascus at one time was inhabited by the Amorites be sustained? Both Paton and Sayce believe that the Amorite migrations took place in the beginning of the third Millennium. Furthermore Sayce also holds that the Amorites at the peak of their power occupied what today is known as the "Fertile Crescent." <sup>81</sup> Barton tells us that the Amorites as late as 1400 B.C. were in Coele-Syria. <sup>82</sup> If that be true, then it can be assumed that they were in Damascus until at least the time of the Exodus. In support of Barton and the foregoing statement Sayce says that "The Amorite Kingdom continued to exist down to the time of the Israelitish invasion of Pal...." <sup>83</sup>

The Amorites are frequently spoken of in the Bible. From Gen. 14:7 the Amorites are known to have lived west of the Dead Sea. Then in Gen. 14:13 we learn that three Amorite chieftains were confederates of Abraham. According to Gen. 14:15 we gain the impression that they lived near Damascus. Thus from the evidence cited above it appears that there were Amorites living in and near Damascus, and also in Palestine as a whole. They also held sway for a number of centuries at least till 1500 B.C. when the Aramaeans came.

The origin of the name Damascus is unknown. The name

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81. A.H.Sayce, "Amorites," The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, I, pp. 119-120.

82. George A. Barton, "Aram, Aramaean," op. cit., pp. 46-47.

83. A.H.Sayce, "Amorites," op. cit. I, pp. 119-120.

occurs in two forms in the Old Testament. The more common form is  $\text{דַּמְשֶׁק}$ , but twice (in I Chron. 18:5; II Chron. 28:5, cf. II Kings 16:10  $\text{דַּמְשֶׁק}$ )  $\text{דַּמְשֶׁק}$ .<sup>84</sup> The latter is the Aramaic form. Commenting on the name Kraeling holds that the original form was Dimashqu from di and mesheq. "Mesheq means 'acquisition,' 'gain' and this Dimaschqu must be 'the one of acquisition,' 'place of gain,' a suitable name of the the city situated on a commercial highway."<sup>85</sup> After the thirteenth century, the Aramaean form "Darmeseq" was in vogue.<sup>86</sup> The name Damascus was found in the tribute lists of Thothmes (ca. 16th. cent.) as Timasku and as Saramaski (13th cent. B.C.) and as Dimasku in the Amarna Letters (1400 B.C.). Thomson favors Saramaski and believes W.M.Mueller is right when he regards it as "representing Tiramaski concluding from the 'ra' in this form that Damascus had by that time passed under Aramaic influence."<sup>87</sup>

D Damascus was situated on a plain seventy miles east of Anti-Libanus called the Ghutah. The plain on the whole is a desert exposed to the hot Arabian winds. Damascus and the surrounding territory, however, was watered by the Abana and Pharpar rivers which transformed the desert territory into a beautiful paradise. Since Damascus was

<sup>84.</sup> George Adam Smith, "Damascus," Encyclopaedia Biblica, I, cols. 987-991.

<sup>85.</sup> Kraeling, op. cit., p. 46.

<sup>86.</sup> Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>87.</sup> C.H.Thomson, "Damascus," op. cit., II, pp. 778-780. George Adam Smith, "Damascus," op. cit., I, cols. 987-991, in agreement regarding the r in name as proof of Aramaic influence.

such a beautiful place, the inhabitants called it the "Pearl of the Desert." So much for Damascus the home of Eliezer.

Abraham is now very old and is aware that death soon will claim him, hence he wishes to see that all things are in order. One major problem facing Abraham is that of finding a wife for Isaac, so he calls Eliezer and commissions him to go to Haran for that purpose. His one wish is that Isaac should not be contaminated by the idolatrous Canaanites living around him. Eliezer after receiving his commission goes to Mesopotamia(Aram-Naharaim ) to the city of Nahor. There seeking God's help he meets Rebekah at that well and is introduced to Bethuel, her father and her brother, Laban. Presenting the proposal of Abraham and Isaac, Rébekah consents to become Isaac's wife. After the exchange of the presents(dowry), Eliezer and his caravan depart with Rebekah and her retinue.

### 3. Jacob visits Laban at Padan-Aram.

The third Aramaean contact like the two previous ones are with the house of Nahor.

Isaac and Rebekah had two sons - Jacob and Esau. Much strife existed between the two brothers which was caused by envy on the part of Esau. As the climax Jacob had to flee to escape Esau's wrath, since he had gained the promise of the firstborn thru and by means of an act of trickery designed by his mother. His flight took him "toward Haran" located in Padan-Aram, Gen. 28:2.

At this point it might be well to determine if possible the meaning of Padan-Aram. There are three opinions as to the derivation of Padan. The first view is that of Zimmern who believes that "Padan is an older equivalent or a by-name of Harran, for padanu in Assyrian means 'road' and is a synonym of Harranu."<sup>88</sup>

The second group try to derive Padan from an Aramaic word "Paddan" meaning yoke. In support of this view the Encyclopaedia Biblica says, "In Assyrian(?) and Aramaic Paddan signifies 'yoke' and by a change of meaning, found also in other languages, it comes to denote a certain area of land, and finally 'corn-land,' but not a 'plain' as is sometimes by those who wrongly take the phrase of 'field of Aram' (Hos. 12:13(12)) to be the translation of

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<sup>88</sup>. Kraeling, op. cit., p. 24.

Padan-Aram." <sup>89</sup> Contrary to this view Delitzsch writes that Padan indicates a broad, desert plain. "In Aramaic and Arabic it is transformed to the oxen yoked to the plough and to the plough itself. But even in these tongues its original meaning of plain, field, cultivated land... has been maintained as a local name." <sup>90</sup>

The last view according to which פָּדָן means field, plain, or broad desert plain, is held by Gesenius, Harkavy, Delitzsch, S. Cohen, Kraeling, and others.

The identification and location of Padan-Aram has provoked a great deal of discussion. There are hardly two authorities who agree as to the exact location and borders of Padan-Aram. Three general views prevail with some minor deviations as to the size of the area of Padan-Aram.

The first school identifies all of Aram-Naharaim with Padan-Aram. Adams is one of the leading proponents of this view. To prove his point he cites a number of passages. (Gen. 25:20; 28: 6,7; 31:18; 35:9; 46:15.).<sup>91</sup> However, the proof drawn from these passages is not conclusive.

The second group believes Padan-Aram is patena, another name for the Hittites of Shalmaneser's inscriptions who occupied the valley of the Orontes and eastward. "Some identify this name with Padan-Aram and Batanaea or Bashan" <sup>92</sup>

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89. Theodor Nöldeke, "Aram," op. cit., I, cols. 276-280.

90. F. Delitzsch, New Commentary on Genesis, II, p. 131.

91. Adams, Biblical Backgrounds, p. 47.

92. A.R.Fausset, "Aram," Bible Encyclopedia, p. 47.

According to many Padan-Aram is to be identified with Haran or Haran and the surrounding territory including the later Edessa. Supporting this latter view in some modified form or another are the International Critical Commentary, Delitzsch, Universal Jewish Encyclopaedia, and others. The writer of the Critical and Popular Bible Encyclopaedia, says, "A part of this region of Aram (Aram-Naharaim) is also called Padan-Aram, the plain of Aram (Gen. 25:20; 28:22, 6,7; 31:18; 33:18), and once simply Padan (Gen. 48:17), also Sedeh-Aram, the field of Aram (Hos. 12:12, whence the 'Campi Mesopotamiae' of Quintus Curtius (3:2,3; 3:8 I; 4:9,6))." <sup>93</sup> Kraeling is against accepting Hos. 12:12 as correlating Padan-Aram with field of Aram,

The more commonly accepted view correlates Paddan Aram with the 'field of Aram' (Hos. 12:12), for in Aramaic and Arabic Paddan or Feddan means a yoke of oxen and then metaphorically the area that a yoke of oxen can plow in a day. But Moses's field of Aram has a much wider meaning than this and, furthermore, in Hosea's day Paddan-Aram can no longer have existed owing to the expulsion of the Aramaeans from Mesopotamia by the Assyrians." <sup>94</sup>

Against identifying Padan with the Aramaic Paddana, Barton says,

It is tempting to identify it with its Aramaic 'Paddana' (Wright, Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts, 1127a) called in Gr.  $\phi 2822\bar{\alpha}$  (Sozomen, vi.33.) (Logomen, VI 33), and in Arabic 'Faddain' (Yakut), but this town was situated in the Hauran, and can not have been the Padan of the Bible, unless it was there

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<sup>93</sup>. Samuel Fallons, "Aram," op. cit., I, pp. 137-138.

<sup>94</sup>. Kraeling, op. cit., p. 24.

intended to say that Laban, like Abraham, had migrated far from Haran. It may be, as Nöldeke suggests, that this name arose from a localization of the patriarchal tradition by the early Christians. That a place in the neighborhood of Haran, or in that region, was intended, there can be little doubt. All the sources place Aram of the patriarchs in the direction of Haran. 95

It appears that Padan-Aram is best regarded as a district or part of Aram-Nahrain. Perhaps it included the land around Haran bounded on the east by the Balih River, and on the northwest by Edessa, and Sarug on the west. This seems to be indicated by the fact that in Genesis ch. 28-31 Padan-Aram and Haran are used interchangeably, (Gen. 28:2 Padan-Aram; 28:5 Padan-Aram; Gen. 28:10 Haran; and 29:4 Haran.)

Here it was that Jacob served Laban 21 years for Leah, Rachel, and also acquired all of his flocks and possessions.

In Gen. 31:19 and v. 30 Laban's images or gods (teraphim) are referred to. Kraeling has this interesting comment. It may have been an Aramaean "mask for the face of the divine image and was worshipped as the giver of family welfare, as strictly Aramaean." 96

In Deuteronomy 26:5 we find this passage referring to Jacob's stay in Padan-Aram. "A Syrian ready to perish was my father." That phrase has been used to show the close

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95. Geo. A. Barton, "Aram," *op. cit.*, II, pp. 64-66.

96. Kraeling, *op. cit.*, pp. 29-30. Usually they have been thought of as being household gods small enough so that Rachel could have easily hid them by sitting on them. Jud. 17:5; 18:14; I Sam. 15:23; 19:13; II Ki. 23:24; Ez. 21:21; Hos. 3:4; Zech. 10:2.

blood relationship of the Israelites and the Aramaeans. The Pulpit Commentary offers this explanation, "He is here called a Syrian or Aramaean, because of his long residence in Mesopotamia (Gen. 29-30), whence Abraham had originally come (Gen. 11:31), and because there the family, of which he was the head, was founded." 97 On this the I.C.C. says, "Jacob is so styled, with intentional disparagement, on account of his foreign connexions; his mother's home had been in Aram-Naharaim (Gen. 24: 10,24), and he spent himself many years in the same country (Gen. 29-31) in the service of his mother's brother, Laban the Aramaean, (Gn.25: 20, 28: 5, in P, 31:20,24 in JE), whose two daughters he married." 98

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97. W.L.Alexander, "Deuteronomy," Pulpit Commentary, VI, p. 406.

98. S.R.Driver, "A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Deuteronomy, V, p. 289.

4. Balaam is called from Beth-Peor to curse Israel.

The last Aramaean contact in this early period occurs when the Israelites are at the banks of the Jordan after their battle with Sihon, king of the Ammorites. Israel's prowess and fame was only too well-known to other Canaanite tribes such as Moab and Midian. The latter two had formed a coalition against Israel and were now seeking means - both foul and fair - to deprive Israel of its great military power. In Num. 22:5 we find that Balak sends his messengers to bring Balaam to curse Israel. What prompted Balak to send for Balaam of Pethor near Haran we are not told.

Balaam, the son of Peor, was an Aramaean. He came from Pethor, a city in northern Aram-Naharaim. It was situated near the Euphrates reiver on the western bank Num. 22:5, by the mountains of Aram-Naharaim Num. 23: 7, and a few miles south of Carchemish. Kraeling has some interesting information on its later history. "From the Assyrian inscriptions we have learned... that Tiglath-Pileser I conquered Pitru (Pethor) on the Euphrates, and placed Assyrian garrisons in Pitru and Mutkinu as outposts against the Ahlane." <sup>99</sup> Many years previous to this Pethor appears in the tax lists of Thothmes III of Egypt,

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99. Kraeling, op. cit., p. 37.

a fact which is evidence for Pethor's antiquity. <sup>100</sup>

Balaam's life, as it is unfolded in Sacred Scriptures was fascinating and yet had a tragic end. He was summoned, as stated before, to curse Israel, God's chosen people. When the messengers arrive, he bids them to wait overnight while he asks God for an answer. <sup>101</sup> God's answer to Balaam is "No," with which message the Goutiers return. They are sent a second time with the same plea. This time God permits Balaam to go, with the condition that he speak only the words God puts into his mouth. However, God is angry with him. While they are on the way, occurs the episode of Balaam's encounter with the Angel. Finally the party arrives and Balaam speaks, but each time he blesses Israel. With the third attempt Balaam speaks the first Messianic prophecy ever uttered by an foreigner of which we have record. The sum and substance is this: A Star shall come out of Jacob and a Scepter shall rise out of Israel, it shall smite the corners of Moab and destroy Sheth, and possess Edom and Seir. Hearing these blessings Balak dismisses Balaam without the intended reward. However, before going Balaam gives Balak this insidious advice that Israel would be weakened greatly if the Midianite and Moabite women would marry Israelites and seduce them into idolatry.

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100. Geo. A. Barton, "Aram," op. cit., pp. 64-66

101. At this point there is a question that enters our minds. How is it that Balaam living at a far off place near Haran (the seat of the moon-go cult) knew of the true God? To speculate is useless, because the Bible gives no answer. A similar parallel might be found in the story of Melchizedek. (Gen. 14:18).

Balaam never again saw his fatherland. Num. 24:24 reads, " And Balaam rose up, and went and returned to his place." In Num. 31:8 we learn that Balaam was killed with the five kings of Midian. Evidently he took up residence in Midian after his dealings with Balak. It seems that the story of Balaam remained with the children of Israel, for time and again his sin and greed is referred to in the Bible. 102

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102. Deut. 23:4,5. Josh. 24:9, 10. Neh. 13:2. Micah 6,5. II Pet. 2:15,16. Jude 11. Rev. 2:14.

## Chapter II

### Aram during the Period of the Judges. 1447-1095.

After Joshua had conquered the Promised Land, he divided the land among the tribes. In Joshua 13, where we have the account of the division of the land, occurs this statement in v. 13, "Nevertheless the children of Israel expelled not the Geshurites, nor the Maachathites; but the Geshurites and Maachathites dwell among the Israelites until this day." They are also mentioned in v. 11 and in chapter 12:5 and in Deut. 3:14. The Geshurites and Maachathites were Aramaean tribes. The I.C.C. substantiates this in a comment on Deut. 3:14 and it also lists a number of parallel references. "Geshur and Maachah were two Aramaean tribes (Gen. 22:24; II Sam. 15: 8; I Chron. 19:6) which continued to be ruled by independent kings in David's time (II Sam. 3:3; 10:6; 13:37, 38; comp. Josh. 13:13): I Ch. 2:23 Geshur and Aram are mentioned as having taken the 'tent-villages' of Jair from the Israelites." <sup>1</sup> The Pulpit Commentary also believes that "These were small Syrian tribes located to the east of Hermon." <sup>2</sup> As seen before the Aramaean migration had

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1. S.R.Driver, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Deuteronomy., pp. 56-57. The writer in the I.C.C. lists Gen. 22: 21 as one of the passages having a bearing on the Aramaeans. In this passage, Aram, Kemuel's son, is mentioned. But Leupold points out that this Aram is "hardly to be regarded as the founder of a nation." For a more detailed explanation see Leupold's Exposition of Genesis, pp. 638-639.

2. W.L.Alexander, Deuteronomy, op. cit., VI., p. 46.

reached its height around 1500 B.C., and the Exodus occurred about 1447 B.C., so that by the middle of the 14th century it is highly probably that the Aramaeans had become firmly established in their respective provinces.

After settling down the Israelites carried on many aggressive campaigns into the enemies' territories. One such expedition was that of the tribes of Judah and Simeon who defeated a coalition of Canaanites and Perizzites under Adonibezek in a series of battles. But on the whole during this period the Israelites manifested a general apathy for the remaining heathen tribes. These later proved a curse to Israel, because they seduced Israel to sin and thereby incurred God's wrath and anger. One such exhibition of God's wrath and anger was the subjugation of all Israel by Chushanrishathaim of Aram-Naharaim.

Chushanrishathaim is another one of those puzzling characters of Old Testament history. We know absolutely nothing of him except for the short account in Judges 3. The historicity of Chushanrishathaim has vigorously been attacked by modern critics for a number of reasons. Up to the present time no mention of Chushanrishathaim has been found in the monuments and inscriptions. To the higher critics it seems incongruous that all Israel was conquered by this Chushanrishathaim and then freed by Othniel a member of one of Judah's small clans. These two views are claimed to be contradictory. The critic's contention is that Judah had very little to do with the other tribes,

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and that the political organization of the commonwealth was too loose. <sup>3</sup>

In the first place we have no reason to doubt that Chushanrishathaim was an actual historical character, just because the contemporary literature makes no mention of him. Other famous Bible characters have not been found in the contemporary literature of their day, and yet they are now regarded as historical. (cf. Joseph in Egypt, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Belshazzar, and the Hittites.) The argument that God chose a man from Judah to free all Israel is not in the least contradictory if we remember the following facts. God's ways are always above man's comprehension. (Is. 55:9). Often God chose an inconspicuous person from some small tribe or clan to perform some great task for him. (The later kings, Saul and David). Then regarding Israel's loose political organization and Judah's dealings with the other tribes we should remember that Israel's government at that time was a theocracy and did not require an elaborate system like that of the later monarchy. Nor do we have to agree with Budde when he says that a "later editor of Judges was a Juddan who arranged the story as to give his own tribe a representative among the judges." <sup>4</sup>

Who was this Chushanrishathaim? Verse 8 tells us that he was a king in Mesopotamia. (Aram-Naharaim). With-

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3. John Dyneley Prince, "Chushanrishathaim," The Jewish Encyclopedia, IV., p. 86.

4. Ibid., IV, p. 86.

out a doubt he must have been an Aramaean, and a king of one of those many kingdoms or "qani" mentioned in the Haran census. <sup>5</sup> Prof. Sayce holds one of the most radical views. He believes Chushanrishathaim to be a Mittannian because his rule approximates that of Rameses III. An added reason is "the eight years during which the king of Aram-naharaim oppressed Israel would exactly agree with the interval between the beginning of the Libyan attack but which was directed against Egypt and the campaign of the Pharaoh against Syria." He furthermore claims that the Egyptian records tell us that the Mitanni of Aram-Naharaim took part in the attack but lingered along the way and tried to settle in Palestine. <sup>6</sup> However, the Rev. Moore and Driver oppose him. Moore says that Prof. Sayce gives no references. The land of the Mittannians is mentioned only twice in the inscriptions of Rameses III, but is only mentioned so that Rameses III's prestige as conqueror might equal that of Thothmes III. Rev. Moore finally concludes after studying this statement of Prof. Sayce, "we know from the Egyptian records that Mitanni of Aram-Naharaim took part in the invasion of Egypt" is an assertion for which Prof. Sayce owes it to us to produce evidence." <sup>7</sup>

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5. cf. p. 23.

6. T. Nicol, "Chushan-Rishathaim," Dictionary of the Bible, I., pp. 536 & 537.

7. George Foot Moore, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Judges, p. 83.

Paton tries to identify Chushanrishathaim as a king of Edom. He regards Judges 3:8-11 as "a case of textual corruption. Aram is a common mistake for Edom ( אַרַם - אֶדוֹם ), and having once been read, Naharaim would easily come into the text as a gloss." 8 He also calls to his defense the "historical situation." Othniel was from Judah near Edom, therefore that reading, of Edom instead of Aram is most likely. Paton after reviewing Klostermann's hypothesis and Marquart's view says, "It can hardly be doubted that Chushan, king of Aram is nothing else than a perverted form of Husham, king of Edom;" 9 (Gen. 36: 31-39). However, there is no substantial evidence in Paton's favor.

To enter into a discussion of the meaning of Chushanrishathaim's name would be futile. But the meaning most frequently advanced is Chushan of wickedness or of double wickedness.

This Mesopotamian invasion of Palestine is the second referred to in Scriptures, although there may have been others of which we have record. (The first was that of Amraphel of Shinar. Gen. 14:1). The Lord God moved Chushanrishathaim to invade Israel as a punishment for Israel's idolatrous practises. The foreign rule lasted.

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8. Paton, op. cit., p. 161.

9. Ibid., p. 162. S. Cohen, "Aram," op. cit., I., pp. 448-450 agrees with Paton. For a very preppsterous explanation as to Chushanrishathaim's origin and person see Paulus Cassel, "Judges." Lange-Schaff, A Commentary on the Holy Bible, IV., pp. 68-69.

eight years and then was thrown off by Othniel, Caleb's nephew after Israel had repented and received God's forgiveness. Commenting on this period McGurdy writes, "This was the last warlike movement against Palestine reported of the Aramaeans to the East of the Euphrates, though Aramaeans, as was natural, formed a large element in the army of Nebuchadnezzar (Jer, 35:11), and we may presume, of the earlier Assyrian invaders." <sup>10</sup>

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10. J.F. McGurdy, "Aram," op. cit., pp. 46-47.

### Chapter III.

#### The Aramaean Contacts with Saul, David, and Solomon.

##### A. Saul's Contacts with the Aramaeans.

By the time the monarchy had replaced the rule of the judges in Israel, their Aramaean neighbors were becoming very powerful. When Saul was made king, ca. 1050 B.C., the Aramaeans were well in control of northern Syria. They had successfully established themselves as masters at Beh-Eden, Damascus, Geshur, Hamath, Maachah, Rechob, Zobah and other places. Other possible spheres of influence were the districts of Hul, Arpad, Riblah, Helbon, Berothai, Tadmor, Hauran, and Abilene.<sup>1</sup> The Aramaean organization at this time seems to have been very loose. There were about fifteen districts and kingdoms, among which that of Zobah seems to have had a leading part.<sup>2</sup> To the west of the Aramaean kingdoms and districts was the Phoenician empire.

With the exception of Chushanrishathaim most of the Aramaeans contacts that we have studied were of a peaceful nature, but now they become belligerent. A number of reasons can be advanced for their aggressive character. In the first place, they were intensely jealous of Israel's

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1. McClintock and Strong, "Aram," *op. cit.*, I, pp. 353-354.

2. I Sam. 14:47. II Sam. 10:16,19.

growing power. Israel's rise had been rapid, and now the Aramaeans were afraid and believed that they would have to fight for their very existence. In the second place, there was a spirit of imperialism showing itself among the Aramaeans. Possibly the Aramaeans' imperialism was stimulated by that of the Phoenicians and the Israelites. Finally, as the Assyrians became stronger and encroached on Aram's territory, Aram looked for allies. Some she got willingly, others like some of the kings of Judah (Asa and Ahaz) had to be coerced. Hence the spirit of belligerency.

I Sam. 14:47 records the first contact of an Aramaean power with the Kingdom of Israel. That power is Zobah. The question now is where are we to locate Zobah. As usual there are almost as many views as writers. Three views are presented for consideration. The first group would put Zobah south of Damascus in the Hauran district. James Kelso <sup>3</sup> and Stenning <sup>4</sup> (following H. Winckler) would identify the Aramaean Zobah with the Subiti who, they claim, settled south of Damascus. These Subiti are mentioned in the inscriptions of Ashurbanipal in a campaign against an Arabian king, Jauta. <sup>5</sup> Volck writes that "Schrader identifies Zobah with the Subit of the inscriptions, which he puts south of Damascus."<sup>6</sup> But if we would accept this view,

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3. James A. Kelso, "Zobah," A Standard Dictionary of the Bible, p. 919. Another view is also mentioned by Mr. Kelso.

4. J.F. Stenning, "Zobah," Dictionary of the Bible, IV, p. 987.

5. Ibid, IV., p. 987.

6. W. Volck, "Aram, Aramaeans, and the Aramaic Language," op. cit., I., pp. 254-255.

two difficulties appear. The first question is, Can the Subiti be identified with the Aramaeans of Zobah. The second problem in this view is that the location of the Subiti has not been definitely established. If it could be proved that the Subiti settled south of Damascus and could be identified with the Aramaeans Zobah, then perhaps this view could be accepted without dispute. <sup>7</sup>

The second school closely related to the third localizes Zobah within the neighborhood of Chalcis on the Lebanon slope. "The chief argument for the latter theory is the mention of Zobah as a source of copper. (II S. 8:8)" <sup>8</sup>

The chief objection to this view probably is that it tends to minimize the importance and size of Zobah, since Scripture speaks of Zobah as a large and powerful state. (I Sam. 14:47, II Sam. 8:3, 4, 10:16). I Sam. 14:47 speaks of kings of Zobah. II Sam. 8:3, 4 tells us that David went to the river Euphrates to recover his territory from Zobah. Then II Sam. 10: 16 informs us that Hadarezer of Zobah had influence and power enough to acquire troops from Aram-Naharaim. Thus the information derived from those passages hardly supports the view above.

The third school attempts to locate Zobah west of the Euphrates and north of Damascus extending as far west as the Anti-Libanus. This view has generally found favor with

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7. In addition the Subiti are also believed to have settled north of Damascus, which would not favor this view.

8. James A. Kelso, "Zobah," op. cit., p. 919.

the following authorities: The Encyclopaedia Biblica,<sup>9</sup> International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia,<sup>10</sup> The Jewish Encyclopaedia,<sup>11</sup> Bible Cyclopaedia,<sup>12</sup> The Popular and Critical Bible Encyclopaedia<sup>13</sup> The International Critical Commentary,<sup>14</sup> Lange Schaff<sup>15</sup> and the Westminster Dictionary of the Bible.<sup>16</sup> This view is

based on the following evidence. 1. There is a city, Berothai (the Berothah of Ez. 47:16?) mentioned in II Sam. 8:8 as a city of Hadadezer, who was king of Zobah (v.5). 2. According to I Chron. 18:3 and II Sam. 8:10 its dominion is expressly stated to have reached to the Euphrates River and then as far north as Hamath. In II Chron. 8:3 Zobah is called Hamath-Zobah. The Hamath of the north is meant, because in v. 4 Tadmor is mentioned and that is as far north as Hamath was. 4. According to II Sam. 8:5,8 and Ez. 47:16 Zobah is placed between Hamath and Damascus. Many believe it should be in the

9. T.K.Cheyne, "Zobah," Encyclopaedia Biblica, IV., cols. 5425, 5426

10. W.M.Christie, "Zobah," The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, V., p. 3154.

11. George A. Barton, "Aram" op. cit., II., pp. 64-66

12. A.R.Rausset, "Zobah," Bible Cyclopaedia, pp. 739 & 740.

13. Samuel Fallows, "Aram," The Popular and Critical Bible Encyclopaedia, I., pp. 137-138.

14. Henry Preserved Smith, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Samuel, p. 127.

15. Chr. Fr. David Erdmann, "The Book of Samuel," Lange-Schaff, op. cit., V., p. 256.

16. John D. Davis, "Aram," The Westminster Dictionary of the Bible, pp. 37-38.

proximity of Emesa. The reasons cited above seem to be the most convincing for locating Zobah between Hamath and Damascus.

One of the great difficulties in locating Zobah has been the fact that archaeologists have not been able to find any remains - literary and otherwise - to relieve our doubts.

Another difficulty with respect to the location of Zobah arises from the view that David's empire was not as extensive as is usually assumed. The Universal Jewish Encyclopaedia, "Some hold that a confusion of Hamath-Zobah in the East Jordan territory with the Hamath on the Orontes has led Bible exegetes to extend unduly the northern boundary, the kingdom of David, which actually reached only to the western foot of Mt. Hermon. (Guthe, H.Klein, Samuel)." <sup>17</sup> However, such "confusion" need not arise if such passages as II Sam. 8:8, I Chron. 18:3, II Sam. 8:10; and II Chron. 8:3 are taken in their literal meaning.

Now to resume our discussion of Saul's dealings with the Aramaeans of Zobah. Most commentators regard I Sam. 14:47 as an integral part of the text. <sup>18</sup> The commentators make the suggestion that I Sam. 14:47 represents a

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17. Isaac Landmann, "Hamath," The Universal Jewish Encyclopaedia, V., p. 191.

18. International Critical Commentary, Lange-Schaff, and Pulpit Commentary. J.F. McCurdy, "Zobah," op. cit., p. 991 says that "I Sam. 14:47, which states that Saul fought against Zobah, is probably based on a confusion with the wars of David."

summary of the wars of King Saul with his enemies. If one takes this view, the possibility of a series of wars between Zobah and Saul is not excluded. On the other hand these wars may have been nothing more than mere skirmishes.. Holy Scriptures does not mention the king of Zobah; but possibly it is Rehob,<sup>19</sup> father of Hadadezer. II Sam. 8: 3.

One might call attention at this point to Paton's comment on I Sam. 14:47 where he states that Edom is "doubtless a textual corruption of Aram." His logic is this: Edom was out of contact with Israel and there is no probability that Saul ever had anything to do with them. Furthermore the Aramaeans were more formidable and they naturally would command most of his attention. This criticism disappears if we follow the suggestion of the commentators that this verse is just a summary of Saul's wars. <sup>20</sup>

About this time the first Assyrian advance is made into Aram under Tiglath-Pileser I (ca. 1100 B.C.). In the first five years of his reign he made inroads against the Aramaeans in Aram-Naharaim and drove out the Aramaic tribe known as the Ahlamé. Tiglath-Pileser I then crossed the Euphrates and took Carchemish and six other cities. The record of this is in the "Prism inscription, which is the earliest Assyrian historical document of any length that

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19. Kraeling believes Rehob is the territory he came from and not the name of his father. Rehob had been settled by Aramaeans. op. cit., p. 40.

20. Paton, op. cit., p. 177.

has come down to us." <sup>21</sup> Tiglath-Pileser subjugated all northern Syria as far as the city of Arvad, but he avoided making attacks on Qadesh and Damascus. After his reign, there was a period of Assyrian decline; a revival of power occurred under Ashurdan II. (ca. 940 B.C.).<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>. Ibid., p. 179.

<sup>22</sup>. Ibid., p. 179.

## B. David's Contacts with Aram-Zobah.

David ascended the throne ca. 1010 B.C. His entire life and reign with the exception of the latter days was virtually one of strife with the neighboring countries. He fought and extended his rule over Amalek, Moab, Ammon, Philistia, Zobah, Edom, and others. His wars with Zobah and her satellites are the ones with which we shall deal.

At this time Zobah held sway among the Aramaean states. The first king of Aram-Zobah, of whom we know, is Rehob. None of his biography is related in the II Samuel or the other accounts. His son and successor is Hadadezer, (the Ben-Hidri in Assyrian inscriptions),<sup>23</sup> who, from all indications, was a very influential and capable ruler, since he persuaded the Aramaeans of Damascus to help. (II Sam. 8: 5). According to I Sam. 14:47 Zobah had many kings or chieftains, whom Hadadezer had welded together into a powerful kingdom. "Nicolaus of Damascus writes that Hadadezer was king 'over all Syria except Phoenicia.' (Fragm.31)." <sup>24</sup>

There has been much dispute regarding David's wars with the Aramaeans. The point of contention is: Does II Sam. 8 and 10, and I Chron. 18 and 19 treat of one Aramaean conflict or two? Keil believes that many of the

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23. R. Payne Smith, "II Samuel," Pulpit Commentary, X p. 224.

24. McClintock and Strong "Damascus," op. cit., II., pp. 647-652.

commentators err when they think "That the first of David's Aramaean wars is given in ch. viii., (i.e. II Sam.), the second in ch. x; for no other reason, however, than because ch. x stands after viii." <sup>25</sup>

The reasons set forth by Keil for the view that one and the same conflict is described in II Sam. 8 and 10 and I Chron. 18 and 19 are most convincing. Keil regards II Sam. 8 and I Chron. 18 as summaries of all the wars of David's reign and giving some details of the Aramaean conflict. In II Sam. 10 and I Chron. 19 Keil points out that we have a fuller account of what was reported in II Sam. 8:12 and I Chron. 18:11, the battle with Aram and Ammon. <sup>26</sup> Furthermore Keil writes, "But if this chapter contains a survey of all the wars of David with the nations that were hostile to Israel, there can be no doubt that the arrangement of the several events is not strictly regulated by their chronological order, but that homogeneous events are grouped together according to a material point of view." <sup>27</sup> Then becoming more specific Keil shows that in II Sam. 8 and I Chron. 18 the Aramaean war mentioned there ended in the complete subjugation of Aram and in the payment of tribute ( II Sam. 8:6). He also allows for the possibility of revolt. However, II Sam. 10:6 and I Chron. 19 say nothing of a revolt but leave us with the impression that

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25. Keil-Delitzsch, "Books of Samuel," IX., p. 355.

26. Ibid., IX., p. 355.

27. Ibid., IX., p. 355.

they were still independent, since they were hired to fight. His concluding argument is this "that the number of Aramaeans killed in the two wars is precisely the same (comp. ver. 4 with X, 18): so that it may be safely inferred, not only that the war mentioned in ch. X., in which the Aramaeans who had come to the help of the Ammonites were smitten by David, was the very same as the Aramaean war mentioned in ch. VIII, but of which the result only is given." <sup>28</sup>

In discussing David's Aramaean encounters we shall first treat of the summary in II Sam. 8: 3-13 and I Chron. 18 and then the expanded accounts as they are in I Sam. 10 and I Chron. 19.

The cause of the Aramaean conflict as Keil rightly points out is the Ammonite War. <sup>29</sup> The Ammonites had hired a large number of troops from Hadadezer. To meet the demands Hadadezer had to reach out as far as the Euphrates for mercenaries. In order to block Hadadezer's effort David sent an army northward. In opposing David, Hadadezer sustained great losses. David's booty of war consisted in a 1,000 chariots, 700 horsemen, and 20,000 footmen. The I Ch. account differs somewhat at this point by giving the figure as 7,000 horsemen instead of agreeing with the II Samuel account which has 700 horsemen. <sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>. Ibid., op. cit. p. 359. Keil is of the opinion that the expanded account in II Sam. 10 is due to the fact that the author wishes to give the background for David's sin in II Sam. 11 and 12.

<sup>29</sup>. Ibid., IX, p. 359.

Hadadezer also had allies, namely the Aramaeans from Damascus and the surrounding Aramaic districts. The Damascenes must have sent a very large army, for of their army both accounts put the number killed at 22,000, a sizable sum for that day.

Furthermore II Samuel says that David "houghed all the chariot horses," . However, in I Chronicles we read this addition, but reserved of them an hundred chariots." These differences need not excite us, because I and I<sup>1</sup> Chronicles are supplements to II Samuel and I and II Kings. <sup>31</sup> When our reporters of today write columns for the newspaper, they frequently have different accounts. Often that is due to different views and materials which reporters want to stress.

The treaty imposed upon Zobah and Damascus was rather severe. In the first place, David placed garrisons in the conquered territories including Damascus to prevent any further resistance. Secondly, tribute in the form of monies and golden shields was taken. The shields were no

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30. This discrepancy may be explained in two ways. Frequently the Old Testament writers may have had various viewpoints as to the classification of the army. Secondly, there is always the possibility of a scribal error in the transmission of the text. It is very probable that the scribes mistook hundred for thousand in the II Samuel account. ----- Keil emends the 700 of II Sam. 8:4 and II Sam. 10:18 to read 7,000 (which I Chron. 18:4 and 19:18 have) and thereby arrives at the total of Aramaeans slain. The total given of both accounts is substantially the same. II Sam. 8:4,5 and I Chron. 18:4,5 have 50,000, while II Sam. 10:18 and I Chron. 19:18 both report 47,000.

31. cf. the parallel of Genesis 1 and 2.

doubt from the body guard. Then, in the third place, David removed much of the brass from the cities in Berothai and Betch which was later used in the Temple at Jerusalem. (I Chron. 18:2).

Both II Sam. 8 and I Chron. 18 carry the next incident, the embassy of Toi(Tou) of Hamath. On the location of Hamath there has been endless dispute. No attempt will be made to take every passage in the Old Testament and determine which Hamath is meant. There are two Hamaths. One, Hamath the Less, is located northwest of Damascus and on the southwest slope of Mt. Hermon. The proponents of this Hamath base their arguments on the assumption of "textual corruptions," interpolations, or glosses. <sup>32</sup>

The view of J.F.McCurdy is more convincing, "The common view is that this Hamath is to be identified with 'Hamath the Great' the modern Hama, which at that time of its greatest power controlled the territory as far as south as the north border of Israel." <sup>33</sup> In addition it might be urged as Hamath is mentioned in Aram's major contacts with Israel, that the Hamath the Less should not be meant because of its small size. Hamath the Great on the Orontes was a powerful kingdom at this time, and most likely Zobah conquered it to protect her northern borders from invasion. Hence also the name Hamath-Zobah.

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32. Paton, op. cit., pp. 183-184.

33. J.F.McCurdy, "Hamath," A Standard Bible Dictionary, p. 315.

Toi, king of Hamath, sent his son Joram (Hadoram in I Chron.) with many gifts and with inquiries as to David's welfare and person. This act on the part of Toi reveals two things. In the first place he wanted to show his gratitude to David for liberating him and his people from Zobah, and, in the second place, the gifts were also meant as tribute.

There is a final difficulty in verse 13 of II Samuel chap. 8 which should be explained. "And David got him a name when he returned from the smiting of Syrians in the valley of salt, being eighteen thousand men." This verse seems to state that the Syrians were killed in the valley of salt. Keil comments on this verse as follows, "The words enclosed in brackets are wanting in the Masoretic text as it has come down to us, and must have fallen out from a mistake of the copyist, whose eye strayed from

□ 7 נִי־תִנִּי־תִנִּי; for though the text is not 'utterly intelligible' without these words, since the passage might be rendered 'after he had smitten Aram in the valley of Salt eighteen men,' yet this would be decidedly incorrect, as the Aramaeans were not smitten in the valley of Salt, but partly at Medeba (I Chron. XIX. 7) and Helam (ch. X.17), and partly in their own land, which was very far away from the Salt valley." <sup>34</sup>  
Verse 12 of I Chron. 18 reports the incident thus: Abishai

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<sup>34</sup>. Keil, op. cit., IX p. 363.

slew 18,000 Edomites in the valley of Salt. Both the LXX and Vulgate have Edom.

The superscription of Psalm 60 says that it was composed in honor of the victories over Aram-Zobah and Edom. Here again the numbers that were slain in the valley of salt are given as 12,000 while the other accounts give the number 18,000. Dr. Kretzmann explains the difference by saying, "David, as king was commander-in-chief of the armies of Israel, the victory therefore being credited to him, but Joab, as the general of the army, dispatched his brother Abishai, the commander of this expedition, which, as it seems, slew twelve thousand Edomites in one battle, and a total of eighteen thousand in the entire campaign, II Sam. 8:13; I Chron. 18,12" 35

The Expanded Account. II Sam. 10: 1-19. I Chron. 19: 1-19. The expanded accounts of II Samuel and I Chronicles give the cause of the Ammonite War which found its climax in the Aramaean War. At the bottom of this conflict was the shameful humiliation and treatment which David's embassy received at the hands of Nahash, the Ammonite, son of Hanun who had been friend of David. However, the real cause may have been much deeper. The elders and counselors of Nahash were probably jealous of Israel's power when this embassy came, they suggested to the king that the Israelites were spies. Regarding Hanun's insult

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35. P.E.Kretzmann, Popular Commentary of the Bible, Old Testament II, p. 118.

Kraeling remarks, "It is very possible that the Ammonites were directly encouraged in such insolence by the Aramaeans, who clearly foresaw the necessity and inevitability of a conflict with the rising Hebrew state and preferred to have the aid of Ammon in this eventuality." <sup>36</sup> As a result of this incident David prepares for war and dispatches his army under Joab and Abishai. In the meantime the Ammonites realize their precarious situation and hire a large Aramaean force from the kingdoms of Zobah, Rehob, Tob, and Maachah. We have previously met Zobah, but the last three are newcomers.

Rehob was an Aramaean settlement according to II Sam. 10:6. As far as can be determined Aram-Beth-Rehob was situated above Lake Huleh, east of the Jordan River. In Judges 18:28 Dan, the former Laish, was built in the valley near Beth-Rehob. <sup>37</sup> Numbers 13:21 serves to correlate this location by placing Rehob in the "entering unto Hamath" which is the deep depression between the two mountain ranges, the Libanus and the Anti-Libanus. Evidently it was not a large and powerful kingdom.

Tob is the next Aramaean state that is spoken of in II Sam. It is mentioned in the story of Jephthah who sought there a haven of refuge. (Jud. 11:3-5). In II Samuel, Tob is referred to as Ish-Tob. Regarding the

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<sup>36</sup>. Kraeling, *op. cit.* p. 41.

<sup>37</sup>. The Popular and Critical Bible Encyclopaedia; Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible, 1901; McClintock and Strong; Encyclopaedia Biblica; International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia; and others.

name McClintock and Strong says, "But though in the ancient versions the name is given as one word, it is probably that the real significance is the 'men of Tob' (q.v.),"<sup>38</sup> Tob is generally located near what is recognized as the district of Gilead known to the Greeks as "the Land of Tubias." (I Macc. 5:13; cf. II Macc. 12:17)<sup>39</sup> It did not figure in the history of Israel as much as Zobah and Damascus.

The last Aramaean state to be mentioned is Maachah otherwise known as Abel-beth-Maachah (II Sam. 20:14) and Aran-Maachah (I Chron. 19:6). In I Chron. 2:23 "Aram appears instead of Maacah."<sup>40</sup> It was also the home of the Maachathites of Deut. 3:14 and Josh. 12:5. Maachah is located almost without exception north and east of Lake Huleh in what is probably known as Jaulan.<sup>41</sup>

J.F. McCurdy claims that they are Aramaean because of Gen. 22:24 where Moses writes that Maachah was descendant of Nahor, an Aramaean.<sup>42</sup>

From Zobah, Beth-Rehob, Maachah, and Tob, Nahash was able to assemble quite a good-sized army, 32,000 in number. Some commentators have had trouble because the II Samuel account has 32,000 men while in I Chron. 19 we read of 32,000 chariots. Dr. Kretzmann seems to have found the right solution when he writes, "The mercenary

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38. McClintock and Strong, "Ish-tob," op. cit., IV., p. 687.

39. J.F. McCurdy, "Tob," Dictionary of the Bible, p. 942.

40. W. Ewing, "Maacah," The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, III., p. 1945.

41. W. Ewing, "Maacah," The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia III., p. 1945.

42. J.F. McCurdy, "Aram," op. cit., p. 47.

troops were such as could fight on horseback as well as in chariots, experienced in both forms of battle."<sup>43</sup>

The price Hanun gave was 2,000 talents of silver worth about \$2,000,000. <sup>44</sup>

Joab with his army set out for the plain of Medeba where the Ammonites were encamping. Medeba was located almost due east of Jerusalem across the Jordan and a little southeast of Rabbath-Ammon. As Joab and the Israelites approached the plain of Medeba, he perceived the battle plan of his enemies: an attack from the front by the Ammonites and from the rear by the Aramaeans. At this point Joab demonstrated his capable leadership by dividing his forces and putting Abishai with a portion of the army to face the Ammonites while he himself with the best divisions met the onslaught of the Syrians. The final outcome of the battle was the defeat and routing of both Syrians and Ammonites. Joab did not follow after his enemies but returned to Jerusalem.

However, from this first encounter, Hadadezer did not learn his lesson. While the Israelites were in winter quarters at Jerusalem, Hadadezer gathered a second large army, even going as far as Aram-Naharaim to acquire soldiers. Schobach was then placed in command of this army. The Syrian advance was met by King David and his army at

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43. P.E.Kretzmann, *op. cit.*, I, p. 677.

44. *Ibid.*, I, p. 677.

Helam, near Hamath. This battle fared no better for the Syrians, because David inflicted on them a great defeat which cost the Syrians the life of Schobach, their general, plus the lives of 7,000 charioteers and 40,000 footmen. <sup>45</sup> A terrific defeat indeed. At last Hadadezer conceded victory and made peace with Israel and became their vassal.

In the story of David there is yet one more Aramaean contact. This contact was not one of national importance and scope, but one which concerned itself only with the personal family life of David. David had married Maacah, daughter of King Talmi of Geshur, an Aramaean. To this union was born Absalom (II Sam. 3:2). From II Sam. 13:37, 38 we learn that Absalom fled to his grandfather after he murdered Amnon who had committed incest with Tamar. Absalom remained there for three years, before he was summoned by his father upon the intercession of Tekoah. (II Sam. 14: 23, 32; 15:8). Geshur may be located due east of the Sea of Chinnereth and southwest of Argob. That it bordered Bashan is evidenced by (Dt. 3:14, Josh. 12:5; 13:11). The Geshuri were one of the few Aramaic tribes that lived in the borders of Israel. (Josh. 13:13).

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<sup>45</sup>. cf. p. 59, footnote 90.

### C. Solomon's Contacts with the Aramaeans.

During the reign of Solomon the Bible does not mention many dealings with the Aramaeans. When Solomon ascended the throne, "The whole of David's kingdom fell to Solomon. It was held intact, with the exception of the Aramaeans who established an independent kingdom at Damascus." <sup>46</sup> Under the reigns of David and Solomon, Israel reached her zenith in military might and prosperity. Solomon's reign was marked by a period of quietude. However, the Pax Israel was interrupted by some border skirmishes.

One of the first contacts that Solomon had with Aramaeans of which we have record is in I Ki. 10:28-29 and the parallel in II Chron. 1:17. These two passages tell us that Solomon was also a great merchant, since he brought chariots out of Egypt and sold them to the Hittites and the Aramaeans. These horses were used principally for chariots (not only war chariots). Commenting on I Ki. 10:20, 29 Keil writes, "The Hittite and Syrian kings, who obtained horses from Egypt through the merchants of Solomon, were partly at least the vassals of Solomon, as his sovereignty extended over all the Canaanites, except the Phoenicians, and over a part of Syria." <sup>47</sup>

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46. J. McKee Adams, Biblical Backgrounds, p. 247.

47. Keil, Books of Kings, XV., p. 181.

II Chron. 8: 3-6 records some of the military measures Solomon took to preserve his kingdom from invasion by foreigners. Verse three of II Chronicles just states the campaigns of Solomon against Hamath-Zobah and the ensuing victory omitting all details. After this campaign, Solomon built a series of fortified cities, Tadmor (The later Palmyra of Queen Zenobia?) which stretched along the northern border of Israel. Dr. Kretzmann sees in this action of Solomon's a two-fold purpose. It was "either to further his commercial enterprises or to secure himself against an attack from the north." 48

Towards the end of Solomon's reign occurred the episode of I Ki. 11:23-25, the seizure of Damascus by Rezon, a usurper. Who was this Rezon? the Bible explains that Rezon was the son of Eliadah. It also adds that he was present when David overcame Hadadezer in battle. (II Sam. 8:3). Rezon's life after the battles with David was not so quiet. Evidently after the wars he became chieftain of a band of "freebooters." Finally Hadadezer was fed up with Rezon's flaunting of the law and sought to punish him. Rezon escaped, made his way to Damascus, and there established himself as ruler. Evidently Zobah had lost much of its vigor and power because of her continued struggles with Saul, David, and Solomon, and therefore was not able to deal with Rezon effectively. The Bible then closes this

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48. P.E.Kretzmann, op. cit. Vol. I, Old Testament, p. 702.

narrative with these words, "And he (Rezon) was an adversary to Israel all the days of Solomon..." (I Ki. 11:25).

The question is often raised whether Hezion<sup>49</sup> can be identified with Rezon. Paton and Kraeling conjecture that Rezon and Hezion are the same. Kraeling writes, "The LXX in 11:23 (I Ki.) has Eseron. This would be the equivalent of Hezron.... But the converse seems to be more likely. I regard Hezion as the name of the first king of Damascus. The form Rezon is secondary."<sup>50</sup> Paton has this to say, "According to the received text, this event took place during the lifetime of David; but the absence of the words, 'when David slew them' from one recension of the LXX raises the suspicion that these words are a gloss. By many Rezon is identified with Hezion, the father of Tabrimmon, the father of Behhadad."<sup>51</sup> Concerning this assertion the Pulpit Commentary states that Rezon is "often identified with Hezion of I Chron. XII 18, but on insufficient grounds."<sup>52</sup> Also against this conjecture is Mr. Thomson who says, "Whether Rezon was himself the founder of a dynasty is not clear. He has been identified with Hezion, father of Tabrimmon, and grandfather of Ben-Hadad I (I Ki. 15:18, but the identification though a natural one is insecure."<sup>53</sup>

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49. Hezion was the father of Tabrimmon and grandfather of Ben-Hadad, kings of Aram-Damascus. (I Ki. 15:18).

50. Kraeling, op. cit., p. 48.

51. Paton, op. cit. p. 187.

52. Joseph Hammond, "I Kings," Pulpit Commentary, XI, p. 234.

53. C.H. Thomson, "Damascus," op. cit., II., pp. 778-780.

The Aramaean Contacts with Israel during the period of the Divided Kingdom are not discussed in this paper. All of these were principally with Aram-Damascus. The rulers of Aram-Damascus are as follows: The first two, Rezon and Hezion - we have already met; then follow Benhadad I, II (Adad-Idri), Hazael, Benhadad III, Tabeal, and Rezin.

In 732 B.C. Tiglath-Pileser III laid siege to Damascus and after several months took it. With the fall of Damascus the Aramaean power as a whole came to an end. Damascus had held sway for nearly 300 years. She never again achieved prominence. From all that can be determined, Tiglath-Pileser's victories were overwhelming, since Damascus never again troubled Israel or Judah. In 720 Salmaneser V invaded the Aramaean countries and defeated Yau-bi'di of Hamath at Karkar and again at Raphia. After these two battles the Aramaean states west of the Euphrates river disappear.

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