

We must distinguish carefully between this ancient kingdom of Syria which occupied the territory directly north of Palestine and Assyria which was the section around Nineveh on the Tigris. Syria was a kingdom with its capital at Damascus, a city formed by an oasis at the entrance to the desert where the River Abana comes out of the mountains. From time immemorial, it has been a great commercial center, as it is today. It is entirely probable that Damascus is the oldest city in the world that is still in existence.

During this period the rulers of Damascus found themselves heads of a district whose commercial importance enabled them to assume a power generally far superior to that of the Israelites. There was constant fighting for many years between the Syrians and the Israelites. At times they allied themselves against the approaching Assyrian menace.

The Assyrian records tell us of the Assyrian attacks on Damascus and of its final conquest. In the Assyrian records, we find the same names for Syrian kings that we find in the Bible, including especially Hazael and Ben-Hadad. The Assyrian inscriptions present the name of Ben-Hadad in a slightly longer form. They generally gave it as Hadad-Idri. Until recently, it was generally believed that the Assyrian scribes had presented the name of Ben-Hadad in its correct form, and that the Bible used an incorrect form of it which may possibly have been in use among the Israelites at this time. The most recent events would lead us to believe that the contrary is the case.

In the inscriptions of Zakar-Hamath is found in Aramaic a mention of this king and a form practically identical with that used in the Old Testament is given. This would look as if the biblical record had given us very accurately the name as the Aramae<sup>ans</sup> themselves used it, while the Assyrian scribes were the ones who used a somewhat