

It will be worth while here to pause to notice an element in the reign of Solomon. That is the account of his commercial dealings with the merchants of South Arabia and of the visit of the Queen of Sheba to him. In recent years, there has been discovered in South Arabia many inscriptions in a peculiar type of characters, but very similar in language to the well known language of North Arabia. These inscriptions are variously dated by scholars between 1500 and 500 B.C. They show a highly developed civilization in that region at this time. It was the place where incense was produced and incense was one of the great commodities of the entire ancient Orient.

In South Arabia in this period occurred some of the greatest irrigating projects of which we have record anywhere in ancient times. These inscriptions are of great importance for the corroboration of the references found in connection with the reign of Solomon.

The kingdom was divided into a small kingdom in the south called the kingdom of Judah and a large kingdom in the north called the kingdom of Israel. Very soon we find references to conflicts between the northern kings and the kings of Syria.

This kingdom of Syria must be carefully distinguished from the Assyrian Empire. The name "Syria" is a name which attached itself to this kingdom at a later date. At this time the people called themselves Aramaeans. Eventually, all of this region became a part of the Assyrian Empire. The Greeks spoke of going into Assyria when they meant entering the nearest part of the region of the Assyrian Empire. The term came to be restricted to this nearest part and was shortened to Syria. It is a bit unfortunate that the name of Assyria has thus been transported by one of the accidents of history to an entirely different region, but the name Syria has now definitely established itself in this region and often the whole region of Palestine and the territory north of it is included under the name of Syria.