

# The Doctrine of Aram (Syria)

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**Preface:** One of the reasons I have become interested in Aram is, R. B. Thieme Jr., in his series on David, goes into great detail about the importance of the Battle of Helam (2Sam. 10) and how this is a war which changed the history of mankind. Therefore, it is important to examine the country of ancient Aram, one of the countries defeated by David in battle.

One fascinating thing I have found in researching this topic is, many ancient historians do not treat Aram as a separate entity or as a world power.

- I. First of all, *Aram* is equivalent to *Syria*; *Syria* is what the Greeks called *Aram*. Some Bible translations choose one or the other; I tend to use both designations. Many Bibles also tend to sometimes use one, and then sometimes use the other, even though they are translating the same exact word (e.g., the ESV, LITV, KJV, etc). In fact, there are surprisingly few English translations which maintain some consistency here (Young's translation does, as we would expect; as well as the BBE, ECB, ERV, God's Word™, HCSB, etc.). The *Complete Apostles Bible*, which is a translation from the Greek, consistently has *Syria* rather than *Aram* (which makes sense, as *Syria* is the Greek word for *Aram*). In the original Hebrew text and Aramaic text, there is no word which can be transliterated *Syria*; only *Aram*.<sup>1</sup>
- II. The location of Syria:
  1. Maps of Aram will be scattered throughout this doctrine, and I have placed them in a particular order (from earliest to latest).
  2. Ancient Aram (Syria) is located roughly where modern-day Syria is: north and northeast of Israel. Ancient Syria generally covered more ground. Also, there is no relationship between ancient and modern Syrians, apart from the ground that they stand on.
    - 1) What we may find frustrating is the ever-changing borders of ancient Syria; however, even in the short 200+ year history of the United States, our borders have changed dramatically, even in my lifetime (with the addition of Alaska and Hawaii). Many of the peoples in the Mideast were nomadic, so they are not going to take a plot of land and hold it. There was a much smaller population at that time, so it was more difficult to hold the borders of a country militarily. Geography, although more advanced than we would think, was still less sophisticated than geography today, where we define the boundaries of our house lot to the nearest tenth of foot. Therefore, defining exact boundaries would have been more difficult. Even more obviously, we simply are not going to have much by way of maps from the ancient world. When it comes to

<sup>1</sup> *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*; James Orr, Editor; ©1956 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; © by Hendrickson Publishers; from E-Sword; Topic: Aram.

defining areas, the Bible is probably the most amazing book, defining the regions in Israel in great detail in Joshua 11–21.

- 2) Quite obviously, we have reasonably clear maps of the world going back a few hundred years. We do not have clear maps of the world going back 5000 years.
- 3) Essentially what we do is, we read in historical documents that a particular country included this

Taken from e-sword maps Bible Atlas Maps 003 Mesopotamia during the time of Abraham.

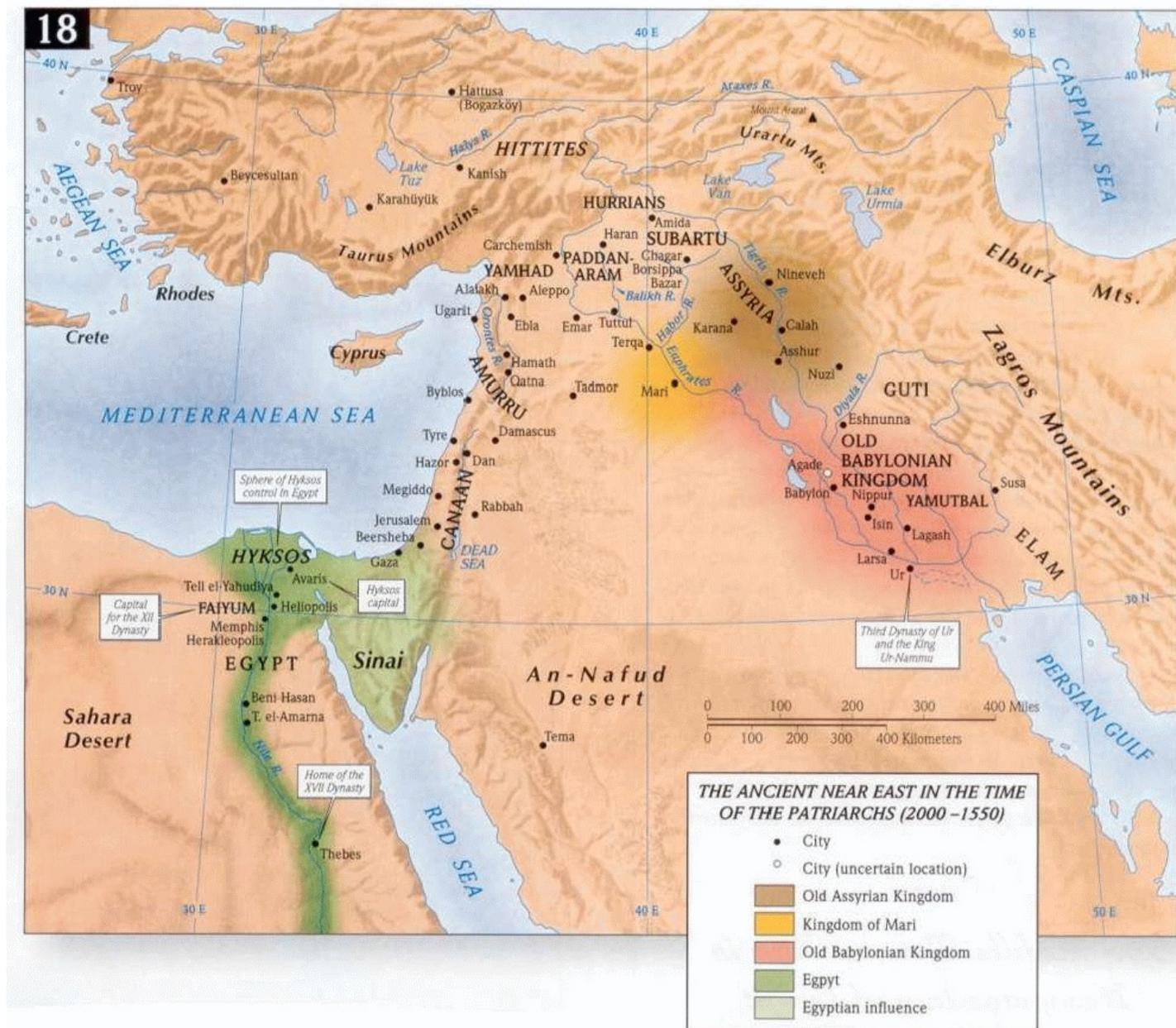


or that city; and they conquered this or that city; and when archeologists can determine where those cities are, then we have an idea as to the geographical influence that country had. One of the outstanding maps which I came across shows the kingdoms of Saul, David and Solomon (in **2Sam. 10**). David has control over Moab, Ammon and Syria; however, the Jews did not move into these areas. David defeated these countries in battle, they brought tribute to him; and in many cases, David established garrisons in these countries (2Sam. 8:11–12). So David did

not increase the size of Israel, as we think of it; but he increased Israel's control or dominance over a particular area, which control was maintained through his and Solomon's reign.

- (1) As a tangent, this is one of the fascinating things about human history, which makes perfect sense in the perspective of the Bible, but less so with regards the human viewpoint. The population of the ancient world was, quite obviously, much smaller than it is today, and holding a piece of land would have been much more difficult for a country to do because that land must be populated. However, history is filled with countries

Bible Atlas Maps courtesy of e-sword; 018 - Ancient Near East in the time of the Patriarchs.



conquering other countries. You desire and do not have. You murder, and are jealous, and are not able to obtain. You fight and you war, and you do not have, because you do not ask (James 4:2).

- (2) This is how the sin nature functions. We continue to want more. I have more books than I will read, more CD's than I will listen to, and more DVD's than I will watch. Most of us

have cans of food or fresh food that we will never eat; clothes that we will never wear again.

4) When a country expands or contracts, there are a lot of things at work: establishment and control of trade routes; control over certain resources; the establishment of buffer territories (for instance, if Egypt is becoming powerful and aggressive, then Aram would prefer to have several countries in between Aram and Egypt to act as a buffer between them); etc.

3. Smith on the location of Aram: *Syria, proper, was bounded by Amanus and Taurus on the north; by the Euphrates and the Arabian desert on the east; by Palestine on the south; by the Mediterranean near the mouth of the Orontes; and then by Phoenicia on the west. This tract is about 300 miles long from north to south, and from 50 to 150 miles broad. It contains an area of about 30,000 square miles.*<sup>2</sup>

1) One things which I cannot explain at this time is, I have come across some maps which differentiate between Aram and Syria.

### III. The geography of Aram:

1. Smith<sup>3</sup> on the general physical features of Aram:



This map is excellent, as it shows roughly what Joshua conquered, and what land remained to be conquered.

Taken from <http://www.anova.org/sev/atlas/hm/038.htm>

<sup>2</sup> Dr. William Smith, *Smith's Bible Dictionary*; 1894; from e-Sword, topic: Syria.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. William Smith, *Smith's Bible Dictionary*; 1894; from e-Sword, topic: Syria.

- 1) *The general character of the tract is mountainous, as the Hebrew name, Aram, (from a root signifying, "height"), sufficiently implies. The most fertile and valuable tract of Syria is the long valley intervening between Libanus and Anti-Libanus. Of the various mountain ranges of Syria, Lebanon possesses the greatest interest. It extends from the mouth of the Litany to Arka, a distance of nearly 100 miles. Anti-Libanus, as the name implies, stands lower against Lebanon, running in the same direction, that is, nearly north and south, and extending the same length. See Lebanon.*
  - 2) *The principal rivers of Syria are the Litany and the Orontes. The Litany springs from a small lake situated in the middle of the Coele-Syrian valley, about six miles to the southwest of Baalbek. It enters the sea about five miles north of Tyre. The source of the Orontes is, but about 15 miles from that of the Litany. Its modern name is the Nahr-el-Asi, or "rebel stream", an appellation given to it on account of its violence and impetuosity in many parts of its course.*
  - 3) *The chief towns of Syria may be thus arranged, as nearly as possible in the order of their importance: 1, Antioch; 2, Damascus; 3, Apamea; 4, Seleucia; 5, Tadmor or Palmyra; 6, Laodicea; 7, Epiphania (Hamath); 8, Samosata; 9, Hierapolis (Mabug); 10, Chalybon; 11, Emesa; 12, Heliopolis; 13, Laodicea ad Libanum; 14, Cyrrhus; 15, Chalcis; 16, Poseideum; 17, Heraclea; 18, Gindarus; 19, Zeugma; 20, Thapsacus.*
  - 4) *Of these, Samosata, Zeugma and Thapsacus are on the Euphrates; Seleucia, Laodicea, Poseideum and Heraclea, on the seashore; Antioch, Apamea, Epiphania and Emesa (Hems), on the Orontes; Heliopolis and Laodicea ad Libanum, in Coele-Syria; Hierapolis, Chalybon, Cyrrhus, Chalcis and Gindarns, in the northern highlands; Damascus, on the skirts, and Palmyra, in the centre, of the eastern desert.*
2. The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia<sup>4</sup> on the Geography of Aram:
- 1) *The Maritime Plain: Syria, within the boundaries given, consists of a series of belts of low and high land running North and South, parallel to the Mediterranean. The first of these is the maritime plain. It consists of a broad strip of sand dunes covered by short grass and low bushes, followed by a series of low undulating hills and wide valleys which gradually rise to a height of about 500 ft. This belt begins in North Syria with the narrow Plain of Issus, which extends to a few miles South of Alexandretta, but farther South almost disappears, being represented only by the broader valleys and the smaller plains occupied by such towns as Latakia, Tripolis and Beirut. South of the last named the maritime belt is continuous, being interrupted only where the Ladder of Tyre and Mt. Carmel descend abruptly into the sea. In the Plain of Akka it has a breadth of 8 miles, and from Carmel southward it again broadens out, till beyond Caesarea it has an average of 10 miles. Within the sand dunes the soil is a rich alluvium and readily yields to cultivation. In ancient times it was covered with palm trees, which, being thence introduced into Greece, were from their place of origin named phoinikes.*
  - 2) *First Mountain Belt: From the maritime plain we rise to the first mountain belt. It begins with the Amanus, a branch of the Taurus in the North. Under that name it ceases with the Orontes valley, but is continued in the Nuseiriyeh range (Mt. Cassius, 5, 750 ft.), till the Eleutherus valley is reached, and thence rising again in Lebanon (average 5,000 ft.), Jebel Sunnin (8, 780 ft.), it continues to the Leontes or Quasmiyeh. The range then breaks down into the rounded hills of Upper Galilee (3,500 ft.), extends through the table-land of Western Palestine (2,500 ft.), and in the South of Judea broadens out into the arid Badiet et-Ti`h or Wilderness of Wandering.*
  - 3) *Second Mountain Belt: Along with this may be considered the parallel mountain range. Beginning in the neighborhood of Riblah, the chain of anti-Lebanon extends southward to Hermon (9,200 ft.), and thence stretches out into the plateau of the Jaulan and Hauran, where we meet with the truncated cones of extinct volcanoes and great sheets of basaltic lava, especially in el-Leja and Jebel ed-Drúz. The same table-land continues southward, with deep ravines piercing its sides, over Gilead, Moab and Edom.*
  - 4) *Great Central Valley: Between Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon lies the great valley of Coele-Syria. It is continued northward along the Orontes and thence stretches away eastward to the*

<sup>4</sup> *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*; James Orr, Editor; ©1956 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; © by Hendrickson Publishers; from E-Sword; Topic: Syria.

*Euphrates, while southward it merges into the valleys of the Jordan and the Arabah. From the sources of the Orontes and Leontes at Baalbek (4,000 ft.) it falls away gently to the North; but to the South the descent is rapid. In Merj 'Ayun it has sunk to 1,800 ft., at Lake Huleh it is over 7 ft., at the Lake of Tiberias - 682 ft., and at the Dead Sea - 1,292 ft., and thence it rises again to the Gulf of Akabah. This great valley was caused by a line of fault or fracture of the earth's crust, with parallel and branching faults. In ancient times the whole valley formed an arm of the sea, and till the Glacial period at the end of the Tertiary (Pleistocene) Age, a lake extended along the whole Jordan valley as far as the Hu`leh. We can thus understand that the great plain and adjoining valleys consist mainly of alluvial deposits with terraces of gravel and sand on the enclosing slopes.*

- 5) *The Eastern Belt: To the East of the Anti-Lebanon belt there is a narrow stretch of cultivated land which in some places attains a breadth of several miles, but this is always determined by the distance to which the eastern streams from Anti-Lebanon flow. Around Damascus the Abana (Barada) and neighboring streams have made the district an earthly paradise, but they soon lose themselves in the salt marshes about 10 miles East of the city. Elsewhere the fruitful strip gradually falls away into the sands and rocks of the Syrian desert, barren alike of vegetable and animal life.*
- 6) *Rivers: The mountain ranges determine the course of the rivers and their length. The streams flowing westward are naturally short and little more than summer torrents. Those flowing to the desert are of the same character, the only one of importance being the Abana, to which Damascus owes its existence. Only the great central valley permits the formation of larger rivers, and there we find the Orontes and Leontes rising within a few feet of each other beside Baalbek, and draining Coele-Syria to the North and South, till breaking through the mountains they reach the sea. The Jordan is the only other stream of any size. In ancient, as also in modern times, the direction of these streams determined the direction of the great trade route from Mesopotamia to Egypt through Coele-Syria and across pal, as also the position of the larger towns, but, not being themselves navigable, they did not form a means of internal communication.*
- 7) *Nature of Soil: The variation in altitude both above and below the sea-level is naturally conducive to a great variety of climate, while the nature of the disintegrating rocks and the alluvial soil render great productivity possible. Both of the mountain belts in their whole length consist chiefly of cretaceous limestone, mixed with friable limestone with basaltic intrusions and volcanic products. The limestone is highly porous, and during the rainy season absorbs the moisture which forms reservoirs and feeds the numerous springs on both the eastern and western slopes. The rocks too are soft and penetrable and can easily be turned into orchard land, a fact that explains how much that now appears as barren wastes was productive in ancient times as gardens and fruitful fields (Bab Talmud, Megh.*
- 8) *Flora: The western valleys and the maritime plain have the flora of the Mediterranean, but the eastern slopes and the valleys facing the desert are poorer. On the southern coasts and in the deeper valleys the vegetation is tropical, and there we meet with the date-palm, the sugar-cane and the sycamore. Up to 1,600 ft., the products include the carob and the pine, after which the vine, the fig and the olive are met with amid great plantations of dwarf oak, till after 3,000 ft. is reached, then cypresses and cedars till the height of 6,200 ft., after which only Alpine plants are found. The once renowned "cedars of Lebanon" now exist only in the Qadisha and Baruk valleys. The walnut and mulberry are plentiful everywhere, and wheat, corn, barley, maize and lentils are widely cultivated. Pasture lands are to be found in the valleys and plains, and even during the dry season sheep, goats and cattle can glean sufficient pasturage among the low brushwood.*
- 9) *Fauna: The animal world is almost as varied. The fox, jackal, hyena, bear, wolf and hog are met nearly everywhere, and small tigers are sometimes seen (compare 2Ki\_14:9). The eagle, vulture, partridge and blue pigeon are plentiful, and gay birds chirp everywhere. The fish in the Jordan and its lakes are peculiar and interesting. There are in all 22 varieties, the largest being*

a kind of perch, the coracinus, which is known elsewhere also in the Nile (Josephus, *Ant.*, III, x, 8), and a peculiar old-world variety locally named 'Abu-musht.

- 10) *Minerals: In both the eastern and the western mountain belts there are abundant supplies of mineral wealth. They consist chiefly of coal, iron, bitumen, asphalt and mineral oil, but they are mostly unworked. In the Jordan valley all the springs below the level of the Mediterranean are brackish, and many of them are also hot and sulfurous, the best known being those Tiberias.*
- 11) *Central Position: The country, being in virtue of its geographical configuration separated into small isolated districts, naturally tended to break up into a series of petty independent states. Still the central position between the Mesopotamian empires on the one hand and Egypt and Arabia on the other made it the highway through which the trade of the ancient world passed, gave it an importance far in excess of its size or productivity, and made it a subject of contention whenever East and West were ruled by different powers.*

IV. With regards to the history of Aram, I was surprised to see that very few historians treat this as a separate world power or as a separate historic national entity, but they look at it more as a plot of land, invaded by and controlled by this group and then that group. Although it is clear that a variety of ancient peoples both populated and controlled ancient Aram, their overall influence as a separate culture cannot be underestimated. One of their contributions to world history is the Aramæan language, which language was adopted all over the ancient world during Old Testament times.

1. Aramæan is a Semitic language spoken throughout the Near East between 700 B.C. and A.D. 700.
2. Ezra and Daniel are partially written in the western dialect of Aramæan.<sup>5</sup>
3. Jesus spoke at least a few things in Aramæan, as is testified to in the gospels when He was on the cross. Although He may have taught in Aramaic from time to time, our only clear, written evidence of this is on the cross, when He cried out “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani,” which is Aramaic for, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (Matt. 27:46).
4. One of the most important translations of the Bible is in Syriac. There is a branch of Christianity which to this day holds to that particular translation as the inspired Holy Bible (which translation is not dramatically different from the Hebrew<sup>6</sup>); and I have come across at least one modern-day, new age cult which purports to be based upon a Syrian Bible (however, their sense of history and the Aramaic language leaves much to be desired).

V. My only explanation for so many historians discounting Aram as an empire would be based upon these things:

1. The Aramæans, like most Semitic groups, began as nomads.
2. Aram never evolved into one great empire. It always *consisted of small, independent states*.<sup>7</sup> There was some sort of cohesiveness amongst these various states, but there never appeared to be a clear-cut single culture or nation.
3. Like all plots of ground, a variety of peoples stepped into this area and many of them conquered it (or portions of it) for a time.
4. It is interesting that Israel is seen as a confederation of tribes, each of which occupied its own area; and that the two great powers around Israel—Phœnicia and Aram—were similarly structured.

VI. Important dates in Syrian history:<sup>8</sup>

1. Unidentified people live in Syria before 4500 B.C.<sup>9</sup>
2. Semites settle Syria circa 3500 B.C.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>5</sup> These first two sub-points come from *The World Book Encyclopedia*; ©1983 by World Book, Inc.; Vol. 1, p. 552.

<sup>6</sup> As a matter of fact, if you chose to base Christianity on the Greek, Latin or Syrian Bibles, there would be no discernable differences between that and orthodox Christian doctrine. The differences found in the Greek Orthodox or the Catholic church are a matter of traditions which have nothing to do with the Bibles which they use.

<sup>7</sup> *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 1, p. 246.

<sup>8</sup> Most of these points come from *The World Book Encyclopedia*; ©1983 by World Book, Inc.; Vol. 18, pp. 858–859.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*; this would take us into the antediluvian era, suggesting that this date may be incorrect.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*; this would also take us back into the antediluvian era, suggesting that this date may be incorrect.

3. 2700–2200 B.C.: Ebla, an early city-state, established in Syria.<sup>11</sup> All of these dates are probably compressed and closer to 2300–2000 B.C., as the flood ended approximately 2343 B.C.<sup>12</sup>
  4. Circa 2300 B.C.: The Akkadians conquer northern and eastern Syria.
  5. Circa 2000 B.C.: Canaanites move into the southwest, Phœnicians settle along the Mediterranean coast and then carry aspects of Syrian culture throughout the Mediterranean world (I am assuming that this would have occurred through trade and/or war).
  6. 1700 B.C. the Amorites had consolidated their control over Syria.
  7. Circa 1500 B.C.: The Aramæans arrive in Syria.
  8. By 1200 B.C., Damascus became a prosperous Aramæan city.
  9. During the late 1200's B.C., the Jews entered into this general territory, bringing with them the news of the One God, Jehovah Elohim.
  10. King David has many conflicts with Aram around 1000 B.C., at which time the Aramæan empire appears to be composed of several city-states, closely allied, whose attempts at expansion are curtailed by King David. 2Sam. 8 10
  11. 732 B.C.: The Assyrians conquer most of Syria.
  12. 572 B.C.: The Chaldeans take control of the Assyrian empire, which includes Syria.
  13. 538 B.C.: Syria becomes a part of the Persian Empire.
  14. 333 B.C.: Alexander the Great gains control of Syria.
  15. 64 B.C.: Syria falls to the Romans.
  16. A.D. 300's: Christianity becomes the state religion of Syria.
  17. A.D. 637: Muslim Arabs invade Syria and take control. Islam replaces Christianity and Arabic replaces Aramaic as the language of the land.
- VII. Ancient Syrian history in a nutshell: *Ancient Syria was conquered by Egypt about 1500 B.C., and after that by Hebrews, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Persians, and Alexander the Great of Macedonia. From 64 B.C. until the Arab conquest in A.D. 636, it was part of the Roman Empire except during brief periods.*<sup>13</sup> This particular site listed nothing of Aram's greatness.
- VIII. Boscawen<sup>14</sup> breaks down Aramæan history into three periods:
1. *The first, the period when the power of the [Egyptian] Pharaohs was dominant over the fertile fields or plains of Syria and the merchant cities of Tyre and Sidon, and when such mighty conquerors as Thothmes III and Rameses II could claim dominion and levy tribute from the nations from the banks of the Euphrates to the borders of the Libyan desert.*
  2. *Second, this was followed by a short period of independence, when the Jewish nation in the south was growing in power, until it reached its early zenith in the golden days of Solomon; and when Tyre and Sidon were rich cities, sending their traders far and wide, over land and sea, as missionaries of civilization, while in the north the confederate tribes of the Hittites held back the armies of the kings of Assyria. R. B. Thieme would contend that the battle of Helam, where David defeated the Syrians, was a turning point both in Syrian and world history.*
  3. *The third, and to us most interesting, period is that during which the kings of Assyria were dominant over the plains of Syria; when Tyre, Sidon, Ashdod, and Jerusalem bowed beneath the conquering armies of Shalmaneser, Sargon, and Sennacherib; and when at last Memphis and Thebes yielded to the power of the rulers of Nineveh and Babylon, and the kings of Assyria completed with terrible fulness the bruising of the reed of Egypt so clearly foretold by the Hebrew prophets.*
  4. *This third period of Aramæan history has Aram under the control of several nations. Syria was first under the control of Assyria (Tiglath Pileser slaying Rezin and carrying away the people of Damascus to Kir); then Babylon, and then Graeco Macedonia. At Alexander's death Seleucus Nicator made Syria head of a vast kingdom, with Antioch (300 B.C.) as the capital. Under Nicator's successors Syria gradually disintegrated. The most remarkable of them was Antiochus IV (Epiphanes), who would have*

<sup>11</sup> 2200 B.C. places us approximately 143 years after the flood.

<sup>12</sup> This is according to the timeline [http://www.irreligion.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/01/bible\\_timeline.gif](http://www.irreligion.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/01/bible_timeline.gif) (accessed January 8, 2010), and with which I most agree (although I have not given this a great deal of study).

<sup>13</sup> From <http://www.factmonster.com/ipka/A0108016.html> accessed January 8, 2010.

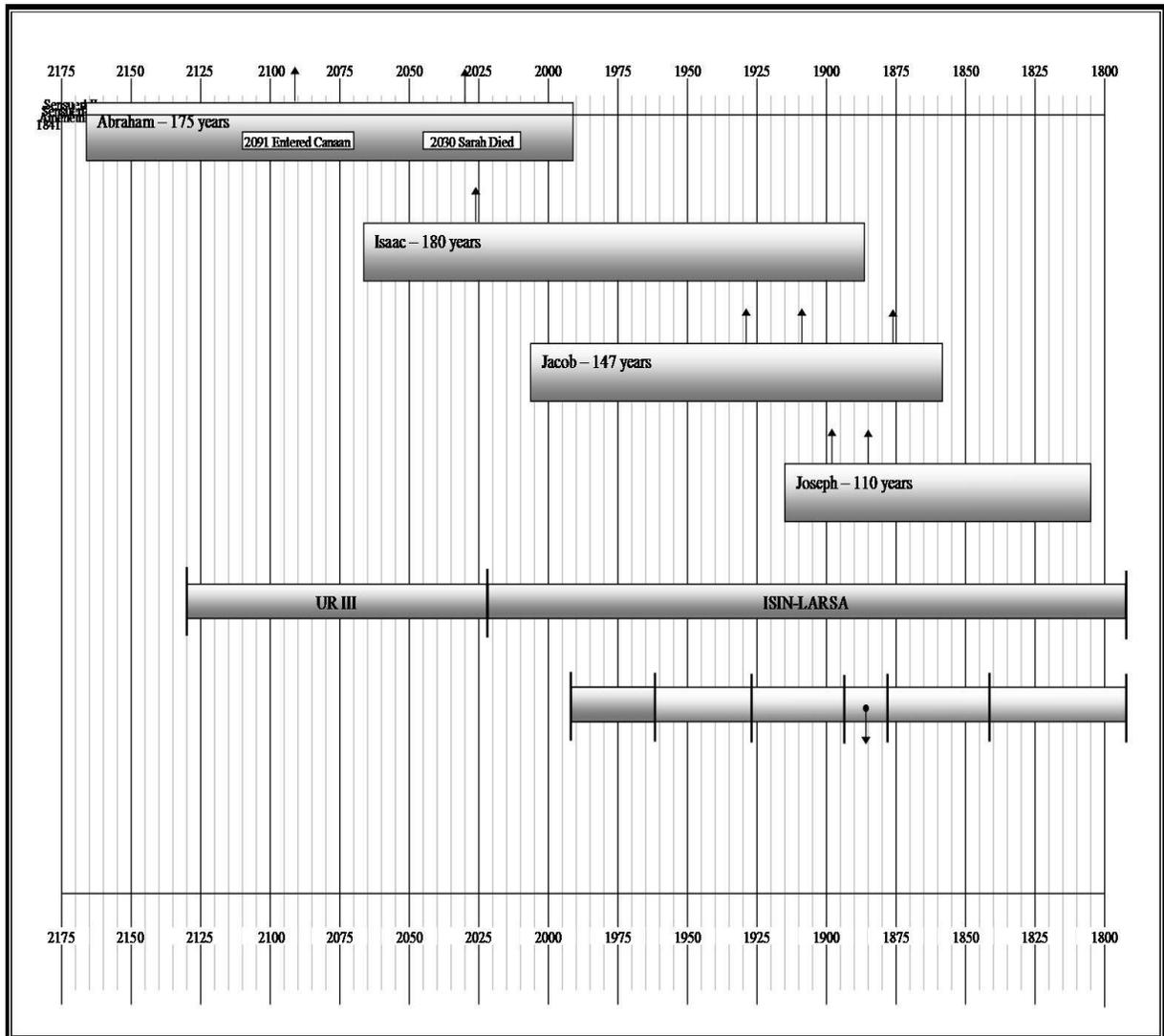
<sup>14</sup> Taken from M.G. Easton M.A., D.D., *Illustrated Bible Dictionary*; 1897; from e-Sword, topic: Syria.

conquered Egypt but for the mediation of Rome (A.D. 168). Then he plundered the Jewish temple, desecrated the holy of holies, and so caused the revolt of the Jews which weakened the kingdom. The Parthians under Mithridates I overran the eastern provinces, 164 B.C. Syria passed under Tigranes of Armenia, 83 B.C., and finally under Rome upon Pompey's defeat of Mithridates and Tigranes his ally, 64 B.C.<sup>15</sup>

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IX. The history of Aram and Aram's interaction with the Jews (it is important to note that, even though we associate the Philistines as Israel's traditional enemies, Aram and Israel appear to be even more intertwined in the corridors of ancient history:

1. We are first exposed to the man Aram in Gen. 10:22 under the table of nations. Aram was a son of



From <http://www.truthnet.org/biblicalarcheology/3/Patriarchtimeline.jpg> accessed January 7, 2010.

Shem (a son of Noah), and one of his sons is named Uz, who is probably the father of the land of Uz where Job lived. However, there is another Uz and another Aram, both of whom are sons of Nahor, Abram's brother. Any son of Shem is properly called *Semitic*. Gen. 22:20–21 1Chron. 1:17

<sup>15</sup> Andrew Robert Fausset, *Fausset's Bible Dictionary*; from e-Sword, topic: Syria.

2. Smith<sup>16</sup> suggests: *The first occupants of Syria appear to have been of Hamitic descent — Hittites, Jebusites, Amorites, etc. After a while, the first comers, who were still to a great extent nomads, received a Semitic infusion, while most, probably, came to them from the southeast.*
3. ISBE,<sup>17</sup> on the other hand, states: *When history begins for us in the 3rd millennium B.C., Syria was already occupied by a Semitic population belonging to the Canaanitic wave of immigration, i.e. such as spoke dialects akin to Hebrew or Phoenician. The Semites had been already settled for a considerable time, for a millennium earlier in Egypt we find Semitic names for Syrian articles of commerce as well as Semites depicted on the Egyptian monuments.*
4. According to ISBE,<sup>18</sup> the first historical incident of which we are certain involves Sargon of Agade (2750 B.C.) who visits the land of Martu 4 times and *makes the people of one accord.*<sup>19</sup> Sargon is apparently a king from the Babylonian area and the Martu are Amorites who live in the land of Aram. Sargon has a son, Naram-Sin, who extends the territory further, maintaining their control over Martu.
5. Interestingly enough, one of the most ancient cities in the world is Damascus, the principle city of Aram, which is mentioned as early as Gen. 14:15 15:2. Perhaps nearly as ancient, the city of Hamath, mentioned in Num. 13:21 34:8.
6. The name *Aram*, as applied to a country or state or city-state is first found in the 23<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. in a cuneiform inscription of the Akkadian King Naram-Sin. There is evidence of nomads in the area of Aram as far back as the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium B.C.<sup>20</sup>
7. For many years, the Babylonians dominated this part of the world, making Assyrian the language of communication between Syrian and Egypt in the Tell el-Amarna letters.
8. From ISBE: *By the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium B.C., we find considerable change in the population. The Mitanni, a Hittite people, the remains of whose language are to be found in the still undeciphered inscriptions at Carchemish, Marash, Aleppo and Hamath, are now masters of North Syria. The great discoveries of Dr. H. Winckler at Boghazkeui have furnished a most important contribution to our knowledge. The preliminary account may be found in OLZ, December 15, 1906, and the Mitteilungen der deutschen orient. Gesellschaft, number 35, December, 1907. Elsewhere the Aramean wave has become the predominant Semitic element of population, the Canaanitic now occupying the coast towns (Phoenicians) and the Canaan of the Old Testament.*<sup>21</sup> This appears to set us up for the Biblical history that we are familiar with; that is, the peoples of that land seem to be settling in that land.
9. By the time that Isaac (Abram's son) came along, there are Aramæans, as his wife is an Aramæan (Gen. 25:20). This suggests that the Aram in Gen. 10:22 is probably the father of the Aramæans. However, Abram did father Isaac very late in life, allowing enough time for there to be 3–5 generations born to Nahor which would allow for the possibility that Aram the son of Nahor is the father of the Aramæans; however, that is far less likely in my opinion. *And Isaac was a son of forty years when he took Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Aramæan from Padan-aram, the sister of Laban the Aramæan, to him for a wife* (Gen. 25:20). This sounds much more like we are dealing with Aramæans marrying into the family of Nahor (or, if you would rather, Nahor's family married Aramæans).
10. This would make the Jews and the Aramæans distant cousins; they are from different sons of Shem; Abram comes from Arpachshad and the Aramæans come from Aram (Gen. 10:21–22 11:10–26).
11. Jacob also took a wife from this branch of the family. He married two daughters of Laban, an Aramæan living in Padan-Aram. Although the Aramæans are distant cousins of Jacob, Laban is Jacob's uncle (Laban and Rebekah are brother and sister). Therefore, the women Jacob marries are his first cousins. On map 18, you can see that Padan-Aram is about 300 miles north-northeast of the land of Canaan, therefore, this is a significant distance for Jacob to travel. We might reasonably

<sup>16</sup> Dr. William Smith, *Smith's Bible Dictionary*; 1894; from e-Sword, topic: Syria.

<sup>17</sup> *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*; James Orr, Editor; ©1956 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; © by Hendrickson Publishers; from E-Sword; Topic: Syria.

<sup>18</sup> *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*; James Orr, Editor; ©1956 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; © by Hendrickson Publishers; from E-Sword; Topic: Syria.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 1, p. 246.

<sup>21</sup> *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*; James Orr, Editor; ©1956 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; © by Hendrickson Publishers; from E-Sword; Topic: Syria.

assume that Jacob was looking for a woman like dear old mum; and, quite obviously, these women would have a similar background and culture to Jacob, and they would speak the same language as Jacob did. Gen. 28:2, 5, 7 29:9-30

12. There is still a principle of separation for the patriarchs. God appeared again to Jacob after he left Padan-Aram (and, in the context of all this, it is apparent that there was a lot of idolatry in that part of the family). Gen. 35:9
13. Many of the patriarchs were actually born in Padan-Aram. Gen. 35:26 46:15
14. For several hundred years, the patriarchs and their children lived in Egypt, and were eventually



Taken from e-sword maps courtesy of The American Bible Society [www.americanbible.org](http://www.americanbible.org) and [www.biblesourcecenter.org](http://www.biblesourcecenter.org) Copyright © 2004 The American Bible Society. This would have been during the time of Joshua and the judges.

enslaved by the Egyptians. Therefore, we hear nothing of Aram in the Bible for about 400 years. Balaam, who was hired to prophesy against the Jews, mentions Aram in Num. 23:7, which is apparently where Balaam came from (Deut. 23:4). At this point in time, Israel had come out of Egypt, had spent 40 years in the desert while Gen X died out, and was now moving northward on the King's Highway, due east of the land of Canaan.

15. Moses, in recalling the history of the Jews, mentions Aram in Deut. 26:5.
16. The borders of the tribe of Gad (Gad is one of the patriarchs of Israel) is up against Aram and Ammon both. This is not land which Israel has completely conquered and it is now under the control of the

tribe of Gad. This is the land which God gave to Gad by lot, and some had been conquered and some had not. Joshua 13:25–27. As has been mentioned, bear in mind the fluidity of the borders. Gad would control portions and even all of this territory from time to time in Israel's history.



### Aram During the Time of David

Taken from Bible Atlas Maps 033 Ancient Near East from 1200–1000 B.C.

17. It appears as though Geshur and Aram took some of this area back, according to 1Chron. 2:23.
18. One of the problems for early Israel was their going astray and marrying women of the heathen peoples around them (the problem was the idolatrous religion of these women). So Israel (or a portion thereof) was put under the thumb of Aram early on. Judges 3:5–11
19. Manasseh had sons through an Aramæan mistress. 1Chron. 7:14
20. Israel's idolatry is mentioned again in Judges 10:6, where the gods of Aram (and those of other countries) are emphasized.

21. From ISBE: *[In the middle to late 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium,] Babylonia was subject to the Kassites, an alien race of kings, and when they fell, about 1100 B.C., they gave place to a number of dynasties of short duration. This gave the Egyptians, freed from the Hyksos rule, the opportunity to lay claim to Syria, and accordingly we find the struggle to be between the Hittites and the Egyptians. Thothmes I, about 1600 B.C. overran Syria as far as the Euphrates and brought the country into subjection. Thothmes III did the same, and he has left us on the walls of Karnak an account of his campaigns and a list of the towns he conquered. In the reign of Thothmes IV the Hittites began to leave their mountains more and more and to press forward into Central Syria. The Tell el-Amarna Letters show them to be the most serious opponents to the Egyptian authority in Syria and Palestine during the reign of Amenhotep IV (circa 1380 B.C.), and before Seti I came to the throne the power of the Pharaohs had greatly diminished in Syria. Then the Egyptian sphere only reached to Carmel, while a neutral zone extended thence to Kadesh, northward of which all belonged to the Hittites. Rameses II entered energetically into the war against Hatesar, king of the Hittites, and fought a battle near Kadesh. He claims a great victory, but the only result seems to have been that his authority was further extended into the neutral territory, and the sphere of Egyptian influence extended across Syria from the Lycus (Dog River) to the South of Damascus. The arrangement was confirmed by a treaty in which North Syria was formally recognized as the Hittite sphere of influence, and, on the part of the Assyrians who were soon to become the heirs of the Hittite pretensions, this treaty formed the basis of a claim against Egypt. About the year 1200 B.C. the Hittites, weakened by this war, were further encroached upon by the movements of northern races, and the empire broke up into a number of small separate independent states. Among the moving races that helped to weaken and break up the Hittite influence in Syria were the Pulusati (or Purusati), a people whose origin is not yet definitely settled. They entered Syria from the North and overcame all who met them, after which they encamped within the Egyptian sphere of influence. Rameses III marched against them, and he claims a great victory. Later, however, we find them settled in Southeastern Palestine under the name of Philistines. Their settlement at that time is in harmony with the Tell el-Amarna Letters in which we find no trace of them, while in the 11th century BC they are there as the inveterate foes of Israel.<sup>22</sup>*
22. From the Encyclopedia Britannica: *[Tiglath-pileser I was] one of the greatest of the early kings of Assyria (reigned c. 1115-c. 1077 B.C.). Tiglath-pileser ascended the throne at the time when a people known as the Mushki, or Mushku (Meshech of the Old Testament), probably Phrygians, were thrusting into Asia Minor (now Turkey). Their invasion constituted a serious threat to Middle Eastern civilization because Asia Minor was the principal source of iron, which was then coming into general use. Tiglath-pileser defeated 20,000 Mushki in the Assyrian province of Kummukh (Commagene). He also defeated the Nairi, who lived west of Lake Van, extending Assyrian control farther into Asia Minor than any of his predecessors had done. He subdued various seminomadic Aramaean tribes living along the routes to the Mediterranean and reached the Syrian coast, where the Phoenician trading cities paid him tribute. Egypt, closely linked by trade with the Syrian coast, made overtures of friendship. After 1100 Tiglath-pileser conquered northern Babylonia.<sup>23</sup> This is what is occurring before and during the reign of Saul. ISBE on this same time period: Assyria was now slowly rising into power, but it had to settle with Babylon before it could do much in the West. Tiglath-pileser I, however, crossed the Euphrates, defeated the Hittite king of Carchemish, advanced to the coast of Arvad, hunted wild bulls in Lebanon and received gifts from the Pharaoh, who thus recognized him as the successor of the Hittites in North Syria.<sup>24</sup>*
23. ISBE on what happened with Syria prior to its conflict with David: *For nearly three centuries now, Syria and Palestine were, except on rare occasions, left in peace by both Mesopotamia and Egypt. In the 12<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Babylonia was wasted by the Elamite invasion, and thereafter a prolonged war was carried on between Assyria and Babylonia, and although a lengthened period of peace succeeded, it was wisely used by the peaceful rulers of Assyria for the strengthening of their kingdom internally.*

<sup>22</sup> *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*; James Orr, Editor; ©1956 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; © by Hendrickson Publishers; from E-Sword; Topic: Syria.

<sup>23</sup> From <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/595525/Tiglath-pileser-I> accessed January 9, 2010.

<sup>24</sup> *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*; James Orr, Editor; ©1956 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; © by Hendrickson Publishers; from E-Sword; Topic: Syria.

*In Egypt the successors of Rameses III were engaged against the aggressive Theban hierarchy. During the XXI<sup>st</sup> Dynasty the throne was usurped by the high priests of Amen, while the XXII<sup>d</sup> were Lybian usurpers, and the three following dynasties Ethiopian conquerors. When the Hittite empire broke up, the Arameans in Central Syria, now liberated, set up a number of separate Aramean states, which engaged in war with one another, except when they had to combine against a common enemy. Such states were established in Hamath, Hadrach, Zobah and Rehob. The exact position of Hadrach is still unknown, but Hamath was evidently met on its southern border by Rehob and Zobah, the former extending along the Biqa'a to the foot of Hermon, while the latter stretched along the eastern slopes of Anti-Lebanon and included Damascus, till Rezon broke away and there set up an independent kingdom, which soon rose to be the leading state; Southeast of Hermon were the two smaller Aramean states of Geshur and Maacah. For nearly three centuries now, Syria and Palestine were, except on rare occasions, left in peace by both Mesopotamia and Egypt. In the 12th century BC Babylonia was wasted by the Elamite invasion, and thereafter a prolonged war was carried on between Assyria and Babylonia, and although a lengthened period of peace succeeded, it was wisely used by the peaceful rulers of Assyria for the strengthening of their kingdom internally. In Egypt the successors of Rameses III were engaged against the aggressive Theban hierarchy. During the XXI<sup>st</sup> Dynasty the throne was usurped by the high priests of Amen, while the XXII<sup>d</sup> were Lybian usurpers, and the three following dynasties Ethiopian conquerors.<sup>25</sup>*

24. ZPEB<sup>26</sup> also says that Aram was probably well-established in the Syrian area by the 12<sup>th</sup> century B.C. and that historical documents list them by name in this area. Aram seemed to grow stronger as Egyptian influence over them and Canaan declined and as *the Mitanni kingdom slowly disintegrated*. Aram increased her borders at this time and it appears as though they were victorious in a war with the Assyrian general-monarch Tiglath-Pileser I (1115–1077 B.C.). The 11<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C. probably marked Aram's time of greatest political influence, which coincided with Assyria's decline. During this time, an Aramæan was on the throne of Babylon (Adad-apad-edwina—1067–1046 B.C.). ZPEB<sup>27</sup> suggests that the Assyrians raised this man up in order to keep some sort of peace with Aram, and to keep them from further encroaching on Assyrian territory, which would have been ancient Mesopotamia around the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers (which is modern-day Iraq). I suspect that the details here are more delicious, but lost to history.
25. We do not hear of the Aramæans in the Bible for a long time after their mention in Judges 19:6. Syria, under Hadadezer, is looking to expand again as far as the Euphrates River (and probably beyond). One of the fascinating passages of the Bible is [And David struck Hadadezer the son of Rehob, king of Zobah, as he went to restore his power at the River](#) (2Sam. 8:3). What is likely occurring is, Aram and Assyria were increasing and decreasing in size, and, at the time of this passage, Aram was moving into Assyrian territory again (territory which they had once possessed). David soundly defeats Hadadezer, so that he joins himself to another Aramæan group (Hadadezer is the Aram-Zobah and he will enlist the help of Aram-Damascus). David solidly defeats Aram and begins to receive tribute from them. He also places garrisons in various Aramæan cities. 2Sam. 8:3–7 1Chron. 18:5–6
26. David mentions Aram specifically in one psalm. Psalm 60 inscription ([To the chief musician. On the Lily of Testimony. A secret treasure of David, to teach; when he struggled with Aram-naharaim, and with Aram-zobah; when Joab returned, and struck twelve thousand of Edom in the Valley of Salt.](#)).
27. In 2Sam. 10, David is at war with Aram again. It seems to be disconnected from the war in 2Sam. 8. That is, nothing of what occurs in 2Sam. 8 appears to be an issue in 2Sam. 10, although we are dealing with roughly the same players. Ammon (southeast of Israel) pisses off David, so they go to Aram (due north of Ammon) for additional troops to back them up, knowing that David would invade (1Chron. 19:6–7). Joab and his brother Abishai bring Israel's army into Ammon and they soundly defeat the Aramæan mercenaries (1Chron. 19:6–15). Aram gets concerned, as they export

<sup>25</sup> *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*; James Orr, Editor; ©1956 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; © by Hendrickson Publishers; from E-Sword; Topic: Syria.

<sup>26</sup> *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 1, pp. 246–247.

<sup>27</sup> *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 1, p. 247.

mercenaries all over the world, so they go to war against David and are soundly defeated there as well. 1Chron. 19:16–19

1) There are certainly some unanswered questions which come to mind: if Aram was paying David tribute and David stopped them from extending their kingdom to the Euphrates, what happened between 2Sam. 8 and 10 to change that? One possible explanation that comes to mind is, David will temporarily lose control over his kingdom to his son Absalom; this could have allowed Aram to gain more independence that would result in 2 Sam. 10 (however, there would be a number of details which would have had to be sorted out). Also, this would mean that 2Sam. 10 is not in chronological order, as much of 2Samuel appears to be.

2) Another question is, are these the same war? What appears to be the case is, there are too many differences between 2Sam. 8 and 10 to be able to reconcile these chapters to one war between Israel and Aram.



Taken from <http://www.oneblood-onerace.org/images/Map7.jpg>

- 3) In any case, this does not mean that there is some sort of contradiction or textual problem with these 2 chapters. There are simply intermediary events which would provide a bridge between these chapters that are missing from the Biblical record.
- 4) R. B. Thieme Jr. suggests that the Battle of Helam in 2Sam. 10 was one of the most decisive and important battles of world history and changed the dynamics of the ancient world forever. Although I cannot seem to find confirmation of this from other sources, Thieme had an incredible, encyclopedic knowledge of ancient history. This defeat of Aram would coincide with its reduced political influence, which peaked, according to ZPEB in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C.<sup>28</sup>
28. The map of the kingdoms ruled by Saul, David and then Solomon is very instructive. The countries which they conquered would not be overrun by Israelites nor would they people the conquered be exported to another land (as many countries did at that time). Garrisons were often established and Israeli soldiers were stationed, and taxes (tribute) were collected. Therefore, it is proper to have separately named countries like Moab, Ammon and Syria, but all under the control of David (and later Solomon). These people remained in their own countries, but they paid tribute to Israel.
29. Absalom, while trying to gain the favor of the people of Israel, mentions his living in Geshur of Aram and what he used to say there in 2Sam. 15:8.
30. Solomon was involved in buying and selling with several countries, including Aram. 1Kings 10:29 2Chron. 1:16–17
31. When Solomon turned against God, God raised up an Aramaic enemy to him, a man named Rezon, a king over Damascus of Aram. It appears as though Solomon may have lost control over Damascus during this time. 1Kings 11:15, 23–25
32. At the time that Israel split into two countries, Aram was able to extricate itself from Israel's control and Damascus became possibly the preeminent city-state of the ancient world, with Hamath being second to it, *and the northern Hittites, whose capital was Carchemish, near Bambuk, third.*<sup>29</sup>
33. *ISBE: In the 9th century Asshur–nazirpal crossed the Euphrates and overran the recently established state of Patin in the Plain of Antioch. He besieged its capital and planted a colony in its territory, but the arrangement was not final, for his successor, Shalmaneser II, had again to invade the territory and break up the kingdom into a number of small principalities. Then in 854 B.C. he advanced into Central Syria, but was met at Karkar by a strong confederacy consisting of Ben–hadad of Damascus and his Syrian allies including Ahab of Israel. He claims a victory, but made no advance for 5 years. He then made three unsuccessful expeditions against Damascus, but in 842 received tribute from Tyre, Sidon and Jehu of Israel, as recorded and depicted on the Black Obelisk. It was not till the year 797 that Ramman–nirari, after subduing the coast of Phoenicia, was able to reduce Mari'a of Damascus to obedience at which time also he seems to have carried his conquests through Eastern Palestine as far as Edom. The Assyrian power now suffered a period of decline, during which risings took place at Hadrach and Damascus, and Jeroboam II of Israel was able (2Kings 14:25) to extend his boundaries northward to the old limits.*<sup>30</sup>
34. By the time that Asa (reigned 911–870 B.C.), grandson of Solomon, began to reign over Judah, the power balance between Israel and Aram had shifted, and he sent gold and silver to Aram. Aram then attacked Israel and controlled some Israeli territories. 1Kings 15:18–20 2Chron. 16:1–7
35. By the time of Elijah (who prophesied in the middle of the 9<sup>th</sup> century B.C.), he was told by God to anoint a king over Aram. 1Kings 19:15
36. After the time of David, the most serious threat of the Aramæans against Israel occurs in 1Kings 20 (circa 857 B.C.). What appears to be the case is, there are a number of city-states throughout the general area of Aram who seem to be loosely allied, the city of Damascus emerging as the head of Aram. Their king attacks and apparently defeats Samaria (the Northern Kingdom). After these attacks, he demands their gold, silver, women and children.

<sup>28</sup> *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 1, p. 248.

<sup>29</sup> Dr. William Smith, *Smith's Bible Dictionary*; 1894; from e-Sword, topic: Syria.

<sup>30</sup> *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*; James Orr, Editor; ©1956 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; © by Hendrickson Publishers; from E-Sword; Topic: Syria.

37. Apparently, from that time on (and probably before that time), Aram and Israel (the Northern Kingdom) were constantly at odds with one another. In 1Kings 22:1, we have the remarkable phrase, that Israel and Aram went 3 years without war.
38. There is an alliance established between the King of Judah (Jehoshaphat—reigned 870–848 B.C.) and the King of Israel (Ahab—reigned 874–853 B.C.); they war against Aram, and, although Ahab is killed (circa 853 B.C.) during the battle, the final outcome of this war is unclear. 2Chron. 18
39. ZPEB on that time period: *After the decline of Solomon's empire, hostilities continued between Israel and the Syrians (Aramæans) some 150 years. In general, Aram-Damascus was able to take advantage of the division between Israel and Judah. The strength of Aram was largely retained by Ben-hadad II of Damascus, who absorbed the satellite kingdoms into a single united Aram-Damascus. He initiated two unsuccessful campaigns against Israel, then reached an agreement with Ahab who joined the anti-Assyrian coalition formed of twelve kingdoms of the area. This alliance, however, needed an imminent threat from Assyria to hold it together. When that danger seemed to have lessened, the Syria-Israel alliance collapsed and Ben-hadad II attacked against and inflicted a decisive defeat on the combined forces of Israel and Judah (853 B.C., at Ramoth-Gilead) (1Kings 22:1–35) Assyria attempted to clear the invaders out of Mesopotamia, and during the first half of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, the Assyrian kings waged war against the strongholds of Aramæan power in Mesopotamia. Shalmaneser turned his attention to Syria, and after a series of incursions, inflicted in 841 B.C. a severe defeat upon a coalition of Aramean states, with which the king of Israel had allied himself. The defeated states apparently did not lose their independence for some decades to come.*<sup>31</sup>
40. This war seems to be continued with Ahaziah (King of Judah 841 B.C.) and Joram (Ahab's son—reigned over Israel 852–841 B.C.), and although the outcome is not clear in this chapter, the record then digresses into political intrigue in Judah and Israel, and Ahaziah and Joram apparently both die at this time. 2Chron. 22:1–7<sup>32</sup>
41. The next engagement recorded between Aram and Israel was when the Aramæan commander, Naaman, with a skin disease, went to Israel to be cured. Elisha the prophet cures him (or tells him how to be cured), and he makes the declarative statement: "I know there's no God in the whole world except in Israel." 2Kings 5
42. Equally unusual is the narrative which follows, where there is a bit of confusion between Aram and Israel and the king of Aram sends in men to take Elisha. God blinds these men. 2Kings 6<sup>33</sup>
43. And just as unusual, are 4 men with skin disease who go into the camp of the Aramæans. However, this camp turned out to be empty and the Aramæans had fled. 2Kings 7
44. In 2Kings 8, the King of Aram in Damascus appears to be more open to the ministry of Elisha than the Northern Kingdom is.
45. There is another incident which involves Aram in 2Kings 9:14–15 in 841 B.C.
46. King Joash of Judah (reigned 835–796 B.C.) paid off the Aramæans not to invade Jerusalem. Although *The Narrated Bible* has Aram's invasion of Jerusalem occur before Joash paying off the Aramæans, Joash suffers deadly wounds as a result of this battle and is later killed off in a conspiracy. Therefore, it is reasonable that Joash first tried to buy off the Aramæans, who then decided to get greedy and attack Jerusalem. 2Kings 12:17–18 2Chron. 24:23–25
47. Because of Israel's great apostasy, God let Aram rule over them. God then allowed them a deliverer, but they did not turn away from their sins. 2Kings 13:3–6
48. Elisha, before his death, tried to guide King Jehoash (reigned in Israel 792–782 B.C.) to war against Aram. 2Kings 13:14–19

<sup>31</sup> *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 1, p.248 .

<sup>32</sup> According to *The Narrated Bible*, 2Chron. 22 follows 2Kings 5–7 and is coterminous with 2Kings 8. *The Narrated Bible In Chronological Order*; narrated by F. LaGard Smith; ©1984 by Harvest House Publishers; Eugene, Oregon; (NIV ©1984 by the International Bible Society); pp. 730–735.

<sup>33</sup> *The Narrated Bible*, which places these chapters in chronological order, has portions of 2Kings 6 and portions of 8 preceding 2Kings 5. *The Narrated Bible In Chronological Order*; narrated by F. LaGard Smith; ©1984 by Harvest House Publishers; Eugene, Oregon; (NIV ©1984 by the International Bible Society); pp. 730–731.

49. Assyrian Adad-Nirari III (810–783 B.C.) launches a new campaign against Aram, besieges and defeats Damascus, and both Aram and Israel begin to pay tribute to Assyria. However, Assyria is distracted by other matters and Jeroboam II (786–746 B.C.) of Israel conquers Damascus.<sup>34</sup>
50. Soon after, Aram oppressed Israel. 2Kings 13:21–25
51. Hosea speaks of Jacob going to Aram for a bride in Hosea 12:12. The application of this is metaphorical, even though this was a real incident.
52. As Judah became more apostate, God used Aram against them. 2Kings 15:37 16:1–6
53. Amos prophesies against Aram (along with other enemies of Israel and Judah). Amos 1:5
54. God through Amos also warns the Israelites of impending doom, as well as of His power, using Aram as an example. Amos 9:7
55. ISBE: *It thus happened that [Assyrian conqueror] Tiglath-pileser III (745–728) had to reconquer the whole of Syria. He captured Arpad after two years' warfare (742–740). Then he divided the territory of Hamath among his generals. At this juncture Ahaz of Judah implored his aid against Rezin of Damascus and Remaliah of Israel. Ahaz was relieved, but was made subject to Assyria. Damascus fell in 732 B.C. and a Great Court was held there, which the tributary princes of Syria, including Ahaz (2Kings 16:10), attended. The Assyrian empire now possessed the whole of Syria as far as the River of Egypt. Sibahe, however, encouraged revolt in what had been the Egyptian sphere of influence and insurrections took place in Phoenicia and Samaria.*<sup>35</sup>
56. ZPEB<sup>36</sup> places capture of Arpad at 743 B.C. Additional struggles and political intrigue followed, and Damascus became an Assyrian province in 732 B.C. Another rebellion that soon followed was put down by Sargon II (721–705 B.C.).
57. ZPEB: *For almost two centuries the northern kingdom of Israel, and the Aramæan state of Damascus were in closer relationship—for good or evil—but Assyrian power, which for over a half century had begun to loom as a threat to Syrian independence, finally overwhelmed both nations. By this time, however, the Aramæans had won a language victory inasmuch as the Aramaic language had become widely spread throughout the Fertile Crescent. Some Assyrian kings employed Aramæan scribes, and during the siege of Jerusalem by Sennacherib (circa 701 B.C.) Aramaic could be used as a diplomatic mode of exchange by non-Aramæans. Inscriptions in Aramaic from this period have been found in widely scattered places.*<sup>37</sup>
58. The Northern Kingdom fell in 721 B.C.
59. It is not really clear historically how the Aramaic language spread throughout the ancient world.
- 1) I could theorize: Aram was between Phoenicia, Israel and Assyria, and facilitated trade between these nations during peace time, and became a language of trade and contracts.
  - 2) Armies from many of the nations in the area would have tromped through Aramæan lands. When conquered, slaves from a nation would often be taken, but not simply to do grunt work. Record keeping and contracts may have been assigned to Aramæans. Recall that there were Aramæan rulers in Assyria, although, from the history which I have studied, that is never fully explained. When it comes to ancient history, the records which we have are quite limited.
  - 3) ZPEB<sup>38</sup> explains it this way: *The civilization of the Arameans was basically nothing more than a clearing house for the cultural productivity of the stronger states about them, and their language was the instrument of a work of cultural assimilation and dissemination, which went far beyond the limits of their local history, and became an element of Near Eastern civilization. The Greeks and Romans were familiar with the Near East to a great extent through the Aramaic sources, and it was to a significant degree that Babylonian, Persian and Hebrew elements were transmitted to Christianity via Aramaic, and through Christianity to the west. At the same time*

<sup>34</sup> From *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 1, 248p. .

<sup>35</sup> *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*; James Orr, Editor; ©1956 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; © by Hendrickson Publishers; from E-Sword; Topic: Syria.

<sup>36</sup> *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 1, p. 248.

<sup>37</sup> *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 1, p. 248.

<sup>38</sup> *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 1, p. 249.

*Aramaic was instrumental in transmitting Greek culture to the east, especially philosophy, which became known to many Arabs through the medium of Aramaic. It was during the Hellenistic period that the differences between the various popular Aramaic dialects became more pronounced, and some of these later became distinct literary languages.*

- 4) ZPEB<sup>39</sup> attributes this in part to their alphabetic system of writing which was in contrast to the more cumbersome cuneiform system used in the Akkadian language. After the exile, the Jews used the Aramaic alphabet for writing their Hebrew language.<sup>40</sup>
  - 5) The book of Esther and portions of Daniel, written during the exile, are written in Chaldean, which is a Neo-Aramaic language. However, in time, the Chaldean version of Aramaic became almost unintelligible to Jews and Christians who spoke Aramaic.<sup>41</sup>
  - 6) It is postulated that, for a time after the exile, the Jews spoke Aramaic more often (which is not dramatically different from the Hebrew) and it is claimed that they used Aramaic in their synagogues, which resulted in the Aramaic targums. *Aramaic then soon became the common language of the post-Biblical Judaism, as reflect in the Mishna, Midrash, and Talmud.*<sup>42</sup> There was very likely more of an amalgamation of the languages during and after the exile (586–516 B.C.)
  - 7) R. B. Thieme Jr. ties the battle of Helam, where King David soundly defeats the Aramæans to a dramatic change in world history, which involved the languages of that time.
  - 8) The Jews were apparently converted to Greek when ruled by the Greeks. The result was the LXX (the Septuagint), the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible.
  - 9) By the time of Christ, apparently many Jews were bilingual (they spoke Aramaic and Greek) or trilingual (the religious types probably knew Hebrew as well).
  - 10) Some churches in the east produced literature in Syriac (an offshoot of Aramaic) and used a Syriac Bible. The Mandaean of Babylon produced their own holy books in their own Aramaic dialect.<sup>43</sup>
  - 11) ZPEB covers the variety of Aramaic dialects and where they were used, and you may refer to p. 250 of volume 1 if you are so interested.
60. Early on in the reign of King Ahaz (reigned in Judah 732–716 B.C.), Aram faces down King Ahaz. Isaiah advises him. Isa. 7:1–9
  61. Barnes<sup>44</sup> tells us that Israel and Aram were allies for a short period of time during the reign of King Ahaz, but that they joined with the Assyrians against Judah soon after. Isa. 9:12
  62. God, through Isaiah, prophesies against Aram (specifically Damascus) and Judah. Isa. 17:1–14
  63. Jehovah Elohim hands King Ahaz over to both Aram and to the king of Israel. 2Chron. 28:5
  64. King Ahaz (reigned in Judah 732–716 B.C.) then makes a deal with the Assyrians to defeat the Aramæans. 2Kings 16:7–18
  65. Interestingly enough, Assyria then went to attack Judah, and they employ psychological warfare against them. The Israeli negotiators plead with the Assyrians to speak to them in Aramaic, so that the people of the wall do not understand all that is being negotiated. 2Kings 18:9–26 Isa. 36
  66. Judah seemed to be attacked on all sides during the reign of Ahaz. 2Chron. 28:16–23
  67. ISBE: *After some difficulty Shalmaneser IV compelled Tyre and Sidon to submit and to pay tribute. Samaria, too, was besieged, but was not taken till Sargon came to the throne in 722. Hamath and Carchemish again rose, but were finally reduced in 720 and 717 respectively. Again in 711 Sargon overran Palestine and broke up a fresh confederacy consisting of Egypt, Moab, Edom, Judah and the Philistines. In 705 the Egyptians under Sibahe and their allies the Philistines under Hanun of Gaza were defeated at Raphia. The last three rulers of Assyria were in constant difficulties with Babylonia and a great part of the empire was also overrun by the Scythians (circa 626 B.C.), and so nothing*

<sup>39</sup> *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 1, p. 249.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> From [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chaldean\\_Neo-Aramaic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chaldean_Neo-Aramaic) accessed January 15, 2010.

<sup>42</sup> *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 1, p. 249.

<sup>43</sup> *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 1, p. 249.

<sup>44</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Isa. 9:12.

further was done in the West save the annexation of the mainland possessions of Phœnicia. In 609 when Assyria was in the death grapple with Babylonia, Pharaoh-necoh took advantage of the situation, invaded Syria, and, defeating Josiah en route, marched to Carchemish. In 605, however, he was there completely defeated by Nebuchadnezzar, and the whole of Syria became tributary to Babylonia. the former Syrian states now appear as Babylonian provinces, and revolts in Judah reduced it also to that position in 586 B.C.<sup>45</sup>

68. One of Judah's last kings was Jehoiakim (reigned 608–597 B.C.), and God sends Chaldeans, Aramæans, Moabites and Ammonite armies against Judah during his reign. 2Kings 24:1–4
69. Jeremiah only spoke once of Aram in Jer. 35:11, where he speaks of the Chaldean and Aramæan armies coming into Judah and the people fleeing to Jerusalem.
70. Barnes: *In his march toward Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar attacked and overthrew Damascus and other Syrian towns. The Jews exulted, not foreseeing that this was but a precursor of that ruin which should discover their own wickedness.*<sup>46</sup> Ezek. 16
71. Aram is mentioned as a trading partner of Tyre when God warns of what will happen to Tyre. Ezek. 27:16
72. In 333 B.C., Syria submitted to Alexander without a struggle.
73. Smith: *Upon the death of Alexander, Syria became, for the first time, the head of a great kingdom. On the division of the provinces among his generals, B.C. 321, Seleucus Nicator received Mesopotamia and Syria. The city of Antioch was begun in B.C. 300, and, being finished in a few years, was made the capital of Seleucus' kingdom. The country grew rich with the wealth, which now flowed into it on all sides.*<sup>47</sup>
74. Smith: *Syria was added to the Roman empire by Pompey, B.C. 64, and as it holds an important place, not only in the Old Testament but in the New, some account of its condition under the Romans must be given. While the country, generally, was formed into a Roman province, under governors who were, at first, proprietors, or quaestors, then procounsuls, and finally legates, there were exempted from the direct rule of the governor in the first place, a number of "free cities" which retained the administration of their own affairs, subject to a tribute levied according to the Roman principles of taxation; secondly, a number of tracts, which were assigned to petty princes, commonly natives, to be ruled at their pleasure, subject to the same obligations with the free cities as to taxation.*<sup>48</sup>
75. Smith: *After the formal division of the provinces between Augustus and the senate, Syria, being from its exposed situation among the province principis, were ruled by legates, who were of consular rank, (consulares), and bore severally the full title of "Legatus Augusti pro praetore". Judea occupied a peculiar position; a special procurator was, therefore, appointed to rule it, who was subordinate to the governor of Syria, but within his own province had the power of a legatus.*<sup>49</sup>
76. Fausset: *In 27 B.C. at the division of provinces between the emperor and the senate Syria was assigned to the emperor and ruled by legates of consular rank. Judaea, being remote from the capital (Antioch) and having a restless people, was put under a special procurator, subordinate to the governor of Syria, but within his own province having the power of a legate. (See BENHADAD; AHAB; HAZAEL, on the wars of the early kings of Syria.) Abilene, so-called from its capital Abila, was a tetrarchy E. of Antilibanus, between Baalbek and Damascus. Lysanias was over it when John began baptizing (Luke 3:1), A.D. 26. Pompey left the principality of Damascus in the hands of Aretas, an Arabian prince, a tributary to Rome, and bound to allow if necessary a Roman garrison to hold it (Josephus, Ant. 14:4, section 5; 5, section 1; 11, section 7). Under Augustus Damascus was attached to Syria; Caligula severed it from Syria and gave it to another Aretas, king of Petra. At Paul's conversion an "ethnarch of king Aretas" held it (2Cor. 11:32).*<sup>50</sup>

<sup>45</sup> *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*; James Orr, Editor; ©1956 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; © by Hendrickson Publishers; from E-Sword; Topic: Syria.

<sup>46</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Ezek. 16:57.

<sup>47</sup> Dr. William Smith, *Smith's Bible Dictionary*; 1894; from e-Sword, topic: Syria.

<sup>48</sup> Dr. William Smith, *Smith's Bible Dictionary*; 1894; from e-Sword, topic: Syria.

<sup>49</sup> Dr. William Smith, *Smith's Bible Dictionary*; 1894; from e-Sword, topic: Syria.

<sup>50</sup> Andrew Robert Fausset, *Fausset's Bible Dictionary*; from e-Sword, topic: Syria.

77. Smith: *Syria continued without serious disturbance, from the expulsion of the Parthians, B.C. 38, to the breaking out of the Jewish war, A.D. 66. In A.D. 44–47, it was the scene of a severe famine. A little earlier, Christianity had begun to spread into it, partly by means of those who "were scattered" at the time of Stephen's persecution, Acts 11:19, partly by the exertions of St. Paul. Gal. 1:21. The Syrian Church soon grew to be one of the most flourishing (Acts 13:1 15:23, 35, 41) (Syria remained under Roman and Byzantine rule till A.D. 634, when it was overrun by the Mohammedans; after which, it was, for many years, the scene of fierce contests, and was finally subjugated by the Turks, A.D. 1517, under whose rule it still remains*<sup>51</sup>.
78. There are 9 or 10 references to Syria in the New Testament, which I will save for another time.
79. ISBE: *Under Persian rule these provinces remained as they were for a time, but ultimately "Ebir nari" or Syria was formed into a satrapy. The Greek conquest with the Ptolemies in Egypt and the Seleucids in Babylon brought back some of the old rivalry between East and West, and the same unsettled conditions. On the advent of Rome, Syria was separated from Babylonia and made into a province with Antioch as its capital, and then the Semitic civilization which had continued practically untouched till the beginning of the Christian era was brought more and more into contact with the West. With the advent of Islam, Syria fell into Arab hands and Damascus became for a short time (661-750 AD) the capital of the new empire, but the central authority was soon removed to Babylonia. Thenceforward Syria sank to the level of a province of the caliphate, first Abbasside (750-1258), then Fatimite (1258-1517), and finally Ottoman.*<sup>52</sup>
80. ZPEB on the significance of the Aramæans: *The Aramæans, whether merchants, peasants, shepherds, soldiers or bandits, were originally nomads and contributed nothing really significant to the Near Eastern civilization except their language.*<sup>53</sup>
- X. According to one source,<sup>54</sup> Aram is broken down into 5 districts:
1. 'Ăram Nâhărayim (אַרַם נַהֲרַיִם) [pronounced *uh-RAHM-naw-huh-rah-YIM*], which means *Aram of the two rivers*; and is transliterated **Aram Naharayim**. The two words are together listed as Strong's #763 BDB #74. We find this in Gen. 24:10 Deut. 23:4 Judges 3:8, 10 1Chron. 19:6 Psalm 60:1 and translated either Aram-Naharayim or Mesopotamia. It has been called Al Djisré, the island, because it is enclosed between the two rivers. It is also called **Padan Aram** (Genesis 25:20 28:5), which designation could refer to either a city or a section of Aram-Naharayim. In this district is yet the city of Ur, the birth-place of Abraham.
  2. The second district is Aram-Damascus or **Aram of Damascus**. 'Ăram Dameseq (אַרַם דַּמֶּשֶׂק) [pronounced *uh-RAHM-dahm-MEH-sehk*] (2 Samuel 8:6); is known in Arabic as Belad al Sham, after Shem, the son of Noah, whom tradition alleges to have built the city. *Damascus* is found 45 times in the Old Testament, and usually associated with *Aram* in some way. Aram is Strong's #758 BDB #74 and Damascus is Strong's #1833 and #1834 BDB #199 and #200. This appears to be the head or the most powerful city-state of the Aramæan empire. Speaking of which, even though these areas often acted in concert with one another, historians do not seem to view this empire to be as cohesive as that of Alexander the Great or the Roman empire.
  3. **Aram Zobah** (2 Samuel 10:6, 8); this is the present Syria proper beyond Palestine. The city of Aleppo is called by our brothers, according to tradition, Aram Zobah, because it is alleged that the residence of the king of the country was in this city. The fort of this place and the Jewish Synagogue likewise, are evidently the remains our of the highest antiquity. This district is likewise called the land of Hamath; its Arabic name is Al Chadshass, and extends from Palmyra to Antiochia.\* \* Zobah is probably the Syria Zabal, Mesopotamia, Apamia, mentioned in Judith 3:1-12. [Not according to my copy.--TRANSLATOR.] (In an Arabic translation of the Scriptures, not that of the celebrated Saadiah, I found in the passage cited, Zobah given by Nexibin, which is the Nizibus beyond Euphrates; but I

<sup>51</sup> Dr. William Smith, *Smith's Bible Dictionary*; 1894; from e-Sword, topic: Syria.

<sup>52</sup> *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*; James Orr, Editor; ©1956 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; © by Hendrickson Publishers; from E-Sword; Topic: Syria.

<sup>53</sup> *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 1, p. 248.

<sup>54</sup> The following sub-points were taken from [http://www.jewish-history.com/Palestine/boundaries\\_index.html](http://www.jewish-history.com/Palestine/boundaries_index.html) accessed December 28, 2009 and severely edited.

deem this exposition not well founded, because Zobah did not extend that far.) These three districts were beyond Palestine proper; the two next following were within the boundary line, and considered a portion of the land of Israel.

4. **Aram Beth Rechob** (2Samuel 10:6) is Coelesyria, and extended southward to the Wady Chasmeia. The celebrated Baal-bek is in this district, and many sections of it are now inhabited by the Druses.
5. **Aram Maachah** (or Aram-Maahah) (1Chronicles 19:6), lies east of Beth Rechob, and the snow-covered mountain of Hermon is found here. The town of Chasbeya (which see) and Abel Beth Maachah (see 1 Kings 15:20, also called Abel Mayim, 2 Chronicles 16:4), belonged to this part of Aram.

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I don't believe that Aram has really received a fair shake in recorded history. Some histories of this area just see it as a plot of ground through which a variety of peoples and cultures came and went, conquered from time to time. However, ancient Aram, although never seen as an empire, still, at its Zenith, controlled a great deal of land (almost from the Mediterranean to the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers) and it left behind an enduring language and alphabet adopted by much of the ancient world, including the Jews.

### The Abbreviated Doctrine of Aram (Syria)

1. Aram is called Syria in the Greek, and there is no relationship between Syria and Assyria (other than they are both made up of Semitic peoples and were in conflict with one another on many occasions). Gen. 10:21–22
2. The Aramæans are first cousins to the Jews (the Jews come through the line of Arpanchshad, Aram's brother). Gen. 10:22 11:11–27
3. Like all nations, there is an ebb and flow when it comes to the borders. Aram, at its largest, was north of Israel and stretched from the Mediterranean Sea all the way to the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. However, like any other country, its boundaries varied dramatically over the centuries. Although modern-day Syria is located in roughly the same place, there is no relationship between modern and ancient Syrians.
4. In researching secular history, I found very few resources which treated Aram as an robust, independent power; and some simply treated Aram as a plot of land invaded, conquered and held by a series of peoples (which is essentially true of any plot of land). What I had a difficult time locating were timelines of ancient peoples which included the Aramæans as a separate group or Aram as a separate country.
  - a. There are several possible reasons for this. The Aramæans seemed to function as separate city-states but with strong alliances.
  - b. They may not have left much by way of records.
  - c. Like all ancient countries, there were conflicts with outside powers and there were certainly times when Aram had been conquered or put down by other countries.
  - d. I also believe in the Satanic influence on history. In this particular case, if Aram is portrayed as simply a plot of land through which other empires marched or which other empires conquered, then the Israeli-Aram wars are not seen as significant to human history.
  - e. However, to see Aram as an insignificant nation is belied by the fact that Aramaic was spoken throughout the middle east between 700 B.C. and 700 A.D..

## The Abbreviated Doctrine of Aram (Syria)

5. Important dates in Syrian history:<sup>55</sup>
  - a. Unidentified people live in Syria before 4500 B.C.<sup>56</sup>
  - b. Semites settle Syria circa 3500 B.C.<sup>57</sup>
  - c. 2700–2200 B.C.: Ebla, an early city-state, established in Syria.<sup>58</sup> All of these dates are probably compressed and closer to 2300–2000 B.C., as the flood ended approximately 2343 B.C.<sup>59</sup>
  - d. Circa 2300 B.C.: The Akkadians conquer northern and eastern Syria.
  - e. Circa 2000 B.C.: Canaanites move into the southwest, Phœnicians settle along the Mediterranean coast and then carry aspects of Syrian culture throughout the Mediterranean world (I am assuming that this would have occurred through trade and/or war).
  - f. 1700 B.C. the Amorites had consolidated their control over Syria.
  - g. Circa 1500 B.C.: The Aramæans arrive in Syria.
  - h. By 1200 B.C., Damascus became a prosperous Aramæan city.
  - i. During the late 1200's B.C., the Jews entered into this general territory, bringing with them the news of the One God, Jehovah Elohim.
  - j. King David has many conflicts with Aram around 1000 B.C., at which time the Aramæan empire appears to be composed of several city-states, closely allied, whose attempts at expansion are curtailed by King David. 2Sam. 8 10
  - k. 732 B.C.: The Assyrians conquer most of Syria.
  - l. 572 B.C.: The Chaldeans take control of the Assyrian empire, which includes Syria.
  - m. 538 B.C.: Syria becomes a part of the Persian Empire.
  - n. 333 B.C.: Alexander the Great gains control of Syria.
  - o. 64 B.C.: Syria falls to the Romans.
  - p. A.D. 300's: Christianity becomes the state religion of Syria.
  - q. A.D. 637: Muslim Arabs invade Syria and take control. Islam replaces Christianity and Arabic replaces Aramaic as the language of the land.

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6. Ancient Syrian history in a nutshell: *Ancient Syria was conquered by Egypt about 1500 B.C., and after that by Hebrews, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Persians, and Alexander the Great of Macedonia. From 64 B.C. until the Arab conquest in A.D. 636, it was part of the Roman Empire except during brief periods.*<sup>60</sup> This particular site listed nothing of Aram's greatness.
7. At least two of the Patriarchs married Aramæan women; some of whom were fairly closely related to the patriarchs. Isaac and Rebekah (Gen. 24); Jacob and Rachel (and Leah—Gen. 28–29). Jacob and Rachel were also first cousins, which means that there was some intermarriage between the Aramæans and the line of Arpachshad.
8. Interestingly enough, one of the most ancient cities in the world is Damascus, the principle city of Aram, which is mentioned as early as Gen. 14:15 15:2. Perhaps nearly as ancient, the city of Hamath, mentioned in Num. 13:21 34:8.

<sup>55</sup> Most of these points come from *The World Book Encyclopedia*; ©1983 by World Book, Inc.; Vol. 18, pp. 858–859.

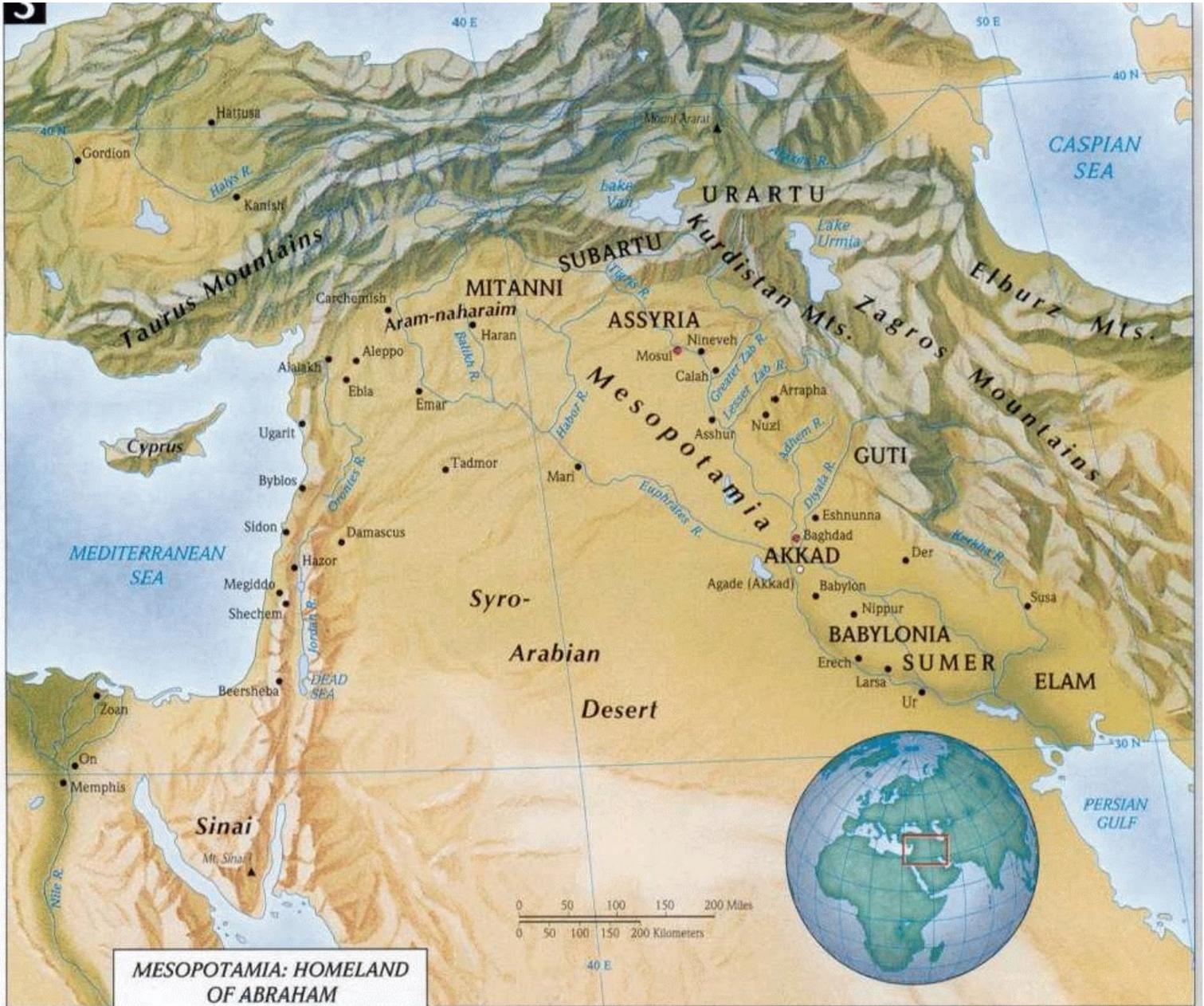
<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*; this would take us into the antediluvian era, suggesting that this date may be incorrect.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*; this would also take us back into the antediluvian era, suggesting that this date may be incorrect.

<sup>58</sup> 2200 B.C. places us approximately 143 years after the flood.

<sup>59</sup> This is according to the timeline [http://www.irreligion.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/01/bible\\_timeline.gif](http://www.irreligion.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/01/bible_timeline.gif) (accessed January 8, 2010), and with which I most agree (although I have not given this a great deal of study).

<sup>60</sup> From <http://www.factmonster.com/ipka/A0108016.html> accessed January 8, 2010.



**MESOPOTAMIA: HOMELAND OF ABRAHAM**

- City
- City (modern name)
- City (uncertain location)
- ▲ Mountain peak

9. Also interesting: Israel, although a cohesive nation, was very much a confederation of tribes. The two nations most similar to Israel in this regard bordered Israel (Phoenicia and Aram, both of which were a confederation of city-states).



10. The name *Aram*, as applied to a country or state or city-state is first found in the 23<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. in a cuneiform inscription of the Akkadian King Naram-Sin. There is evidence of nomads in the area of Aram as far back as the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium B.C.<sup>1</sup> However, these nomads do not appear to be Aramæans.
11. When we think back to great empires, we often dwell upon Rome, Greece or Assyria, and see these are empires which controlled vast land masses at various times. However, Aram appears to be more a loose confederation of city-states, much like the Philistines.
  - a. Therefore, we read about the Aramæans of Damascus coming to help King Hadadezer, the king of Zobah in 2Sam. 8:5; however, these are both Aramaic cities, as are Betah and Berothai, which are mentioned in 2Sam. 8:8.
  - b. King David acts as a mediating factor with regards to the kingdom of Aram, keeping it from growing too large, and maintaining it both as a buffer country, and as a source of tribute. 2Sam. 8:3, 6–8
12. David's conflicts with Aram defined both his enemies (e.g., Ammon—2Sam. 10) and his allies (e.g., King Toi—2Sam. 8:9–10).
13. Although David appears to have had an alliance with Ammon (which alliance is never fully developed or even explained in the Old Testament), this alliance was shattered by King Hanun, who embarrassed David's ambassadors and resulted in a war between David and Ammon allied with Aram, which morphed into a war with Aram. R. B. Thieme, Jr. calls the battle between Israel and Aram (the Battle of Helam) one of the most important and decisive in Israel's history. 2Sam. 10
14. According to the ZPEB,<sup>61</sup> Aram's greatest political influence was in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries and its decline would have coincided with David's several victories over the Aramæans.
15. Because Syria borders the Northern Kingdom, there continued to be alliances and conflicts between Israel and Aram for many centuries.
16. Aram's great lasting contribution to culture is its language. The book of Esther and portions of Daniel are written in Aramaic. The Jews apparently adopted their alphabet to their Hebrew. For reasons which are not completely clear, the use of Aramaic was found throughout the Middle East, and the Jews used this language, in part, for at least a couple hundred years; and much of the Old Testament was paraphrased and translated into Aramaic (e.g., the targum of Onkelos). The Midrash and a portion of the Talmud (Jewish commentaries on the Old Testament, as well as a codification of their doctrines) was written in Aramaic. However, both Jews and Christians alike view the Hebrew Old Testament as being the inspired Word of God. Some branches of Christianity give particular reverence to the Syriac translation of the Bible, which is one of the most ancient. Syriac is a form of Aramaic.

<sup>1</sup> *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 1, p. 246.

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<sup>61</sup> *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 1, p. 248.

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