

theology, like that of so many of its Hellenistic-Roman contemporaries, developed the idea of reward and punishment in the next life, which accordingly now consisted of a heaven and a hell.

Recommended Reading

In addition to the items listed below, special issues of two journals contain many articles on the Phoenicians: *Archaeology* 43.2 (1990) and *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 279 (1990). The items by Jidejian and Moscati, plus the special issue of *BASOR*, include extensive bibliography. Detailed annual bibliographies are published in the journal *Rivista di Studi Fenici* (Rome).

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Arameans

Wayne T. Pitard

Now Ben-hadad king of Aram mustered his entire army. Accompanied by thirty-two kings with their horses and chariots, he went up and besieged Samaria and attacked it.

—1 Kings 20:1

The Arameans were a large group of linguistically related peoples who spoke dialects of a West Semitic language known as Aramaic and who lived over a substantial part of the Fertile Crescent during the first millennium, largely in Mesopotamia and Syria. The Arameans in south Syria had numerous contacts with biblical Israel and appear quite often in the Hebrew Bible. This is especially the case with the Aramean state that had its capital at Damascus. Although never a unified political power like the Assyrians or Babylonians, the Arameans came to have a major cultural influence on the Near East, as their language slowly became the *lingua franca* of the Persian Empire and eventually replaced many of the local languages of the area, including Hebrew.

Origins

The Bible preserves some legendary material concerning the origins of the Arameans and their relationship to the Israelites. The genealogies in Genesis, apparently created to indicate the relation between the Israelites and their Near Eastern neighbors, provide two distinct traditions as to the place of the Arameans in the political makeup of the Near East. In the earlier genealogical notice (Gen. 22:21), Aram, the eponymous ancestor of the Arameans, is a grandson of Abraham's brother Nahor. This suggests that at one time Aram was basically considered an equal of Israel (= Jacob, grandson of Abraham). But in the priestly table of nations (Gen. 10:22), dating to a time when Aramean influence was widespread across the Near East, Aram is listed

as a son of Shem, along with Elam, Ashur (Assyria), Arpachshad, and Lud. A third tradition about Aramean origins occurs in Amos 9:7, where Yahweh is said to have brought the Arameans (probably here particularly referring to the Arameans of Damascus) to their present homeland from an unknown location called Qir or Kir.¹

Biblical traditions attested largely in Genesis (25:20 and 31:20, where Abraham's relatives Bethuel and Laban are identified as Arameans) and Deuteronomy (26:5, where Jacob himself is called an Aramean) assume a close relationship between Israel and the Arameans. Such traditions fit well with the overall worldview evident in Israelite literature that there was a blood relation with most of the Semitic-speaking nations surrounding them, whether those nations were usually hostile or friendly toward Israel (e.g., Edom = Esau, Jacob's brother; Moab and Ammon, descendants from Lot, Abraham's nephew; Ishmaelites, descendants of Isaac's half-brother). These traditions, however, provide little historical insight into the origins of the various ethnic groups of Syria-Palestine.

The early development of the Arameans is, in fact, shrouded in obscurity. They make their first incontestable appearance in ancient documents only in the late twelfth century,² in the years following a period of general collapse and chaos throughout the ancient Near East that began around 1250. Scholars have normally assumed that the Arameans represent a new population influx into northern Syria and Upper Mesopotamia during this period of collapse. They are viewed as nomadic hordes from the Syrian desert that swept northward and invaded the lands where they are found in the twelfth and eleventh centuries, conquering the native populations and quickly Aramaizing the area. From their new foothold along the Middle Euphrates, according to the common reconstruction, the Arameans began to spread out, moving southwest into Syria and southeast into Babylonia.³ This view, while

1. Ran Zadok points out that, in a thirteenth-century document from Emar on the Middle Euphrates, one Pilsu-Dagan, a king of Emar, is also called "king of the people of the land of Qir" ("Elements of Aramean Pre-History," in *Ah, Assyria . . . : Studies in Assyrian History and Ancient Near Eastern Historiography Presented to Hayim Tadmor*, ed. Mordechai Cogan and Israel Eph'al, Scripta Hierosolymitana 33 [Jerusalem: Magnes, 1991], 114). This may locate Qir along the course of the Middle Euphrates.

2. For a discussion of possible earlier references to Aram, see Roland de Vaux, *The Early History of Israel*, trans. David Smith (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 200–205.

3. See, e.g., J. Nicholas Postgate, "Some Remarks on Conditions in the Assyrian Country-side," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 17 (1974): 234–37; J. D. Hawkins, "The Neo-Hittite States in Syria and Anatolia," in *CAH* 3/1:380–82; Hayim Tadmor, "The Decline of Empires in Western Asia ca. 1200 B.C.E.," in *Symposia Celebrating the Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the Founding of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, ed. Frank M. Cross (Cambridge, Mass.: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1979), 11–14.

still the predominant one in the scholarly literature, may be called into question by recent anthropological studies concerning pastoral nomadism and the role of nomads in the rise and fall of civilizations. The scenario described above falls into a pattern of scholarly reconstructions of transitional periods in ancient Near Eastern history, characterized by the notion that urban cultures are often destroyed by invading hordes of nomadic barbarians. The nomads subsequently take over the land and eventually settle into villages, which then develop into cities. This scenario has been proposed to explain several such transitions: the collapse of the Early Bronze Age civilization in Palestine around 2300, the renewal of urbanization at the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age in the same area around 2000, the collapse of the Neo-Sumerian culture in southern Mesopotamia around 2000, and the collapse of Mycenaean civilization in Greece (the so-called Dorian invasion) around 1200. In recent studies there has been an increasing recognition that pastoral nomads in the Near East played only a minor role in the collapse of these cultures and that the archeological evidence gives no indication of major population shifts at these junctures. Economic, climatic, and social causes seem to have had a much more significant role in the changes evident in the collapses of the cultures.⁴ Although, to my knowledge, no substantial discussion has related these new anthropological/sociological insights to the origins of the Arameans, it would seem that the traditional invasion model is also inadequate as an explanation for the appearance of these peoples. The early sources give no clear hint that the Arameans were newcomers into Upper Mesopotamia. They are portrayed as large, tribally oriented groups with substantial pastoral components and also large numbers of members living in towns and villages. This description is quite similar to that of the large tribes that inhabited this area during the eighteenth century, as known from the Mari archives.⁵ It seems quite unlikely that the Arameans were immigrants into Syria and Upper Mesopotamia at all, but rather that they were the West Semitic-speaking peoples who had lived in that area throughout the second

4. The literature in this area is now quite substantial. A good place to begin looking at the issues is Kathryn A. Kamp and Norman Yoffee, "Ethnicity in Ancient Western Asia during the Early Second Millennium B.C.: Archaeological Assessments and Ethnoarchaeological Perspectives," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 237 (1980): 85–104. See also Niels P. Lemche, *Early Israel*, *Vetus Testamentum Supplement* 37 (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 80–163; and Norman Yoffee, "The Collapse of Ancient Mesopotamian States and Civilization," in *The Collapse of Ancient States and Civilizations*, ed. Norman Yoffee and George L. Cowgill (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1988), 44–68.

5. See Victor H. Matthews, *Pastoral Nomadism in the Mari Kingdom (ca. 1830–1760 B.C.)*, *American Schools of Oriental Research Dissertation Series* 3 (Cambridge, Mass.: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1978); and Giorgio Buccellati, "The Kingdom and Period of Khana," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 270 (1988): 43–61.

millennium, some as pastoralists and some in villages, towns, and cities. During the period following the collapse of the Hittite Empire, this West Semitic element of the population slowly became politically dominant in several areas, and it is this element, then, that begins to appear in the sources in the late twelfth century.⁶

The traditional understanding of the origins of the Aramean tribes in southern Mesopotamia, which views these tribes as migrating slowly down the Euphrates into Babylonia and especially into the land along the southern end of the Tigris, seems quite plausible. But even here, as John Brinkman points out, the Aramean tribes are located basically in the same area where the Amorite tribes are known to have lived in the early second millennium, which suggests the possibility that these Arameans are actually the descendants of the Amorites who had long since been part of the Babylonian population.⁷ The preserved documentary evidence is simply too ambiguous at this point to draw conclusions about the origins of the Arameans in Babylonia.

Arameans in Northern Syria and Upper Mesopotamia (Eleventh to Eighth Centuries)

The first clear references to Arameans are found in the royal Assyrian inscriptions of the late twelfth and eleventh centuries. Tiglath-pileser I (1114–1076) came into conflict with Aramean tribes during his campaigns of expansion to the southwest of Assyria.⁸ In one campaign, Tiglath-pileser claims to have fought the Arameans from Suḫu on the Babylonian border northward to Carchemish on the Euphrates. After they had been defeated, the Arameans retreated southward across the Euphrates to the Mount Bishri area. But Tiglath-pileser pursued them, destroyed six Aramean towns in the region,

6. A similar reconstruction may be found in Glenn M. Schwartz, "The Origins of the Aramaeans in Syria and Northern Mesopotamia: Research Problems and Potential Strategies," in *To the Euphrates and Beyond*, ed. O. Haex, H. Curvers, and P. Akkermans (Rotterdam/Brookfield: Balkema, 1989), 281–86. It is likely that some degree of population displacement did occur in northern Syria and Upper Mesopotamia. The Neo-Hittite kingdoms of northern Syria show a stratum of society that had clearly migrated from central Turkey after the fall of Hatti. This may have caused some further migrations of groups in north Syria. But this migration remains largely unconnected to the supposed Aramean invasions, which are most often viewed as coming from the desert to the south. There is simply no evidence that the populations of Upper Mesopotamia and northeast Syria were displaced by large groups of Aramean tribes that had been living previously in the desert.

7. See John A. Brinkman, *A Political History of Post-Kassite Babylonia 1158–722 B.C.* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute Press, 1968), 281–85.

8. English translations of the Assyrian inscriptions from Tiglath-pileser I through Ashurnasirpal II may be found in A. Kirk Grayson, *Assyrian Royal Inscriptions*, vol. 2 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1976).

and returned to his capital with considerable booty.⁹ It is clear from a study of Tiglath-pileser's overall military strategy that his desire was to control the major trade routes from the Mediterranean and Anatolia to Babylonia. The Aramaic pastoral nomads of the Middle Euphrates and the Habur River region clearly proved to be a problem for Tiglath-pileser in keeping the routes open, since the nomads often supplemented their income by raiding caravans. This probably explains Tiglath-pileser's being forced to attack the Arameans almost yearly throughout his reign. In one inscription he states, "I have crossed the Euphrates twenty-eight times, twice in one year, in pursuit of the *ahlamu* Arameans."¹⁰

Tiglath-pileser's reign appears to have ended during a period of serious drought in the Near East. A fragmentary part of a Middle Assyrian chronicle is interpreted as describing a large-scale Aramean invasion of Assyria during the famine, which led to the Aramean capture of Nineveh and the flight of Tiglath-pileser and his army.¹¹ It should be pointed out, however, that this reconstruction of the text remains uncertain, and it is not clear what the role of the Arameans actually was and whether they were involved in a capture of Nineveh at all.

Whatever the actual situation was during the time of this famine, the Aramean tribes along the Habur River and the Middle Euphrates continued to be a problem for Assyria through the eleventh and tenth centuries. Ashurbel-kala (1073–1056), Tiglath-pileser's son and second successor, carried out campaigns against Aramean groups located to the northwest of Assyria, in the Habur triangle region, and westward to the Euphrates.¹² Following Ashurbel-kala's reign, there is a period of about a century during which Assyria went into eclipse. Very little is known of this period or the causes that led to the sharp decline in the fortunes of the state. Some scholars propose that the situation was largely due to the increased pressure of the Aramean groups spreading along the Euphrates,¹³ but other factors are likely to have played significant roles as well.

The inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser I and Ashurbel-kala suggest that the Arameans they encountered were largely pastoralists and villagers, with no evidence of developed political centralization. However, by the late eleventh and early tenth centuries, sources indicate that a number of more centralized states had come into existence in Syria and Upper Mesopotamia under

9. *Ibid.*, #34.

10. *Ibid.*, #97.

11. Tadmor, "Decline of Empires," 12–13.

12. Grayson, *Assyrian Royal Inscriptions*, ##235–47.

13. For example, A. Kirk Grayson, "Assyria: Ashur-dan II to Ashurnirari V (934–745 B.C.)," in *CAH* 3/1:248.

Aramean control, alongside other similar states whose ruling elites were culturally related to the older Hittite realm (the "Neo-Hittite" states, such as Patina, Hamath, Que, and Gurgum). These Aramean states were limited in size and never became a consolidated power like Assyria or Babylonia, under a single native ruler. Each state appears to have been ruled by a member of the dominant tribe, and several of the states came to be called after the eponymous founder of the dynasty, using the form *bit*-PN ("the house of PN").¹⁴

In Upper Mesopotamia, the major Aramean states attested in the sources include Bit-Zamani, Bit-Bahiani, Bit-Halupe, and Laqu in a north-south line along the Upper Tigris and the Habur River to its junction with the Euphrates. These states lay directly on the western border of Assyria. To the west, in the Great Bend of the Euphrates River, was Bit-Adini, a formidable opponent to Assyrian expansion during the early ninth century. To the west of the Euphrates was Yaḥan, which later came to be known as Bit-Agusi, and Arpad. To the northwest of Bit-Agusi was a small Aramean state called Sam'al, known largely because of the numerous local inscriptions found at its capital (modern Zenjirli). To the south of Bit-Agusi was the important state of Hamath, which was ruled in the tenth and ninth centuries by kings bearing Anatolian names, but by the early eighth century had rulers with Aramaic names. Hamath, like most of the states in northern Syria, presumably had a mixed population of Arameans and Anatolians; thus the alternation of rulers with Anatolian and Aramaic names probably has little to do with major population shifts in the state and may not even identify the ethnic background of the ruler. To the south of Hamath, we know of two important Aramean states: Aram Zobah, located in the northern Baqa' Valley of Lebanon and extending into the Plain of Homs in central Syria, which was a substantial political power in the early tenth century; and Aram Damascus, which succeeded Zobah politically and became one of the most important of the Aramean states. The Bible also mentions other smaller Aramean states, including Aram Beth-rehob, Aram Maacah, and Geshur. In addition to all these more organized states, there were numerous minor Aramean tribes and towns throughout Syria and Mesopotamia that maintained their own identities, but were usually dominated by the larger tribes and were rarely mentioned in the texts.

The little historical information preserved about the Aramean states in Upper Mesopotamia is largely concerned with their conflicts with Assyria and their eventual incorporation into the Assyrian Empire. The Assyrian drive for control of the Aramean lands along the Habur River began again with the reign of Ashur-dan II (934–912) and picked up steam during the fol-

14. PN is an abbreviation used frequently in Assyriological studies for "personal name."

lowing reigns of Adad-nirari II (911–891) and Tukulti-Ninurta II (890–884).¹⁵ But the decisive period came with the appearance of Ashurnasirpal II (883–859), the first of the great Neo-Assyrian monarchs.¹⁶ Ashurnasirpal's campaigns effectively subdued the Aramean states of Bit-Zamani, Bit-Bahiani, Bit-Halupe, and the area of Laqu. Bit-Adini was involved in a number of anti-Assyrian intrigues during this time, at one point supporting a rebellion in Bit-Halupe (883) by aiding in the assassination of the pro-Assyrian governor and replacing him with a man from Bit-Adini.¹⁷ Sometime between 877 and 867 it also gave aid to a rebellion in Laqu, Hindanu, and Suḫu. A prince of Laqu took refuge in Bit-Adini, and Ashurnasirpal ravaged many towns of the latter in retaliation.¹⁸ But Bit-Adini did not fully submit to the Assyrian king.

During the reign of Shalmaneser III (858–824), Assyrian domination stretched further westward.¹⁹ Following a bitter four-year struggle, Bit-Adini was finally incorporated into the Assyrian provincial system, so that Assyrian control now reached all the way to the Euphrates.²⁰ Further west, Shalmaneser made vassals of the several Aramean and Neo-Hittite states, such as Bit-Agusi (called Yaḥan during the reign of Ashurnasirpal), Sam'al, and the Neo-Hittite Carchemish, Patina, Kummuhu, Gurgum, Que, and others.²¹ Shalmaneser's military goals in the west were not, however, limited to northern Syria. He was intent on expanding Assyrian domination into central and southern Syria as well. In 853 he marched his troops southward into Hamath, where he met a huge coalition of Syro-Palestinian states and fought them near the Hamathite royal city of Qarqar (discussed below).²²

From 853 through the rest of Shalmaneser's reign, northern Syria and Upper Mesopotamia appear to have remained largely subject to Assyria. During the last few years of Shalmaneser's reign and during the subsequent years of Shamshi-Adad V (823–811), Assyria was besieged with problems and, ac-

15. For texts from Ashur-dan II, see Grayson, *Assyrian Royal Inscriptions*, #361, 363, 391; for Adad-nirari II, #421, 424–34; and for Tukulti-Ninurta II, #467, 474–75.

16. For his reign, see Grayson, "Assyria," 253–59.

17. Grayson, *Assyrian Royal Inscriptions*, #547.

18. *Ibid.*, #578–80.

19. For a brief summary of this reign, see Grayson, "Assyria," 259–69. The major texts of Shalmaneser's reign were edited and translated in a series of articles by Ernst Michel: "Die Assur-Texte Salmanassars III. (858–824)," *Die Welt des Orients* 1 (1947–52): 5–20, 57–71, 205–22, 255–71, 385–96, 454–75; 2 (1954–59): 27–45, 137–57, 221–33, 408–14; 3 (1964): 146–55; 4 (1967–68): 29–37. An older, but generally good translation of the major texts into English is Daniel D. Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia*, 2 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1926–27), 1:200–252.

20. Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia*, 1:559–61, 599–609.

21. *Ibid.*, 601, 610.

22. *Ibid.*, 611.



from 'Ain et-Tell in North Syria, 9th century. (height: 6' 7")

Courtesy of Alan R. Millard

cording to an inscription of Adad-nirari III,²³ the states of northern Syria began to pull away from Assyrian control. Adad-nirari III (810–783) was able to stabilize the situation somewhat. After a campaign (808) to subdue Guzanu in Bit-Bahiani, which had rarely been out of the Assyrian orbit during most of the century, Adad-nirari spent the campaigns of 805 and 804 fighting a coalition of states led by Bit-Agusi under its king Attarshumki. Adad-nirari was able to break the rebellion and return northern Syria to Assyrian control.²⁴

Most of the first half of the eighth century saw a steady decline of Assyrian power in northern Syria. The Assyrian governor for the area, Shamshi-ilu, whose administration lasted virtually the entire half-century, seems to have been more influential in the politics of Syria than the Assyrian kings. Shamshi-ilu led a number of the campaigns listed in the Assyrian eponym canon as royal campaigns.²⁵ But by the mid-760s the Assyrian government was being wracked by internal rebellion, and Arpad and other western states had once again declared independence.

The exact political situation in northern Syria during the 760s and 750s is unclear and problematic. One of the most enigmatic aspects of this period is related to the well-known Sefire treaties and the identification of the dominant member of those treaties. These stone inscriptions, containing a treaty between Mati'el (son

23. Alan R. Millard and Hayim Tadmor, "Adad-nirari III in Syria: Another Stela Fragment and the Dates of His Campaigns," *Iraq* 35 (1973): 61.

24. *Ibid.*, 58–62.

25. See Hawkins, "Neo-Hittite States," 404–5.

of Attarshumki), king of Arpad, and Bir-ga'ya, king of a land called *ktk*, were found early this century at Sefire, a town that belonged to Arpad/Bit-Agusi in the mid-eighth century. What makes this treaty so enigmatic is that Arpad, the major political power in northern Syria earlier in the eighth century, is the subordinate member in the treaty, being dominated by the king of the otherwise unknown *ktk*. This is particularly mysterious in view of an extant vassal treaty between Mati'el and Ashur-nirari V of Assyria.²⁶ Where was the land of *ktk* located, and how did it develop enough power to briefly subject Arpad? Why is it not mentioned in Assyrian inscriptions, and what happened to it after the mid-eighth century? In spite of numerous proposed identifications of *ktk*, no scholarly consensus has developed over the interpretation of this episode in north Syrian history.²⁷

In 744 Tiglath-pileser III came to power and began a process of consolidation that allowed him to regain full control over the north within a few years. The leader of the Syrian alliance against Tiglath-pileser was Mati'el of Arpad, who had been the vassal in the Sefire treaties. With the support of Urartu and the states of Melid, Gurgum, and Kummuhu to the north, Mati'el fought against Tiglath-pileser in 743 and was defeated. Tiglath-pileser besieged Arpad for three years and finally captured it. Bit-Agusi caused no further problems for Tiglath-pileser. In 738 the king fought and defeated Unqi and Hamath, and by 737 all of northern Syria had been constituted into Assyrian provinces, as had part of Hamath.²⁸

Arameans in Central and Southern Syria (Tenth to Eighth Centuries)

The earliest historical information so far preserved concerning the Aramean states in southern Syria is found in 2 Samuel 8 and 10, which recount three battles fought between the Aramean state of Zobah, under its ruler Hadadezer, son of Rehob (this might better be translated "the Rehobite," since Hadadezer also appears to have been the ruler of another small Aramean state called Beth-rehob), and Israel, under the leadership of

26. For the Assyrian treaty, see Ernst Weidner, "Der Staatsvertrag Assurniraris VI. von Assyrien mit Mati'ilu von Bit-Agusi," *Archiv für Orientforschung* 8 (1932–33): 17–34. For an English translation, see Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia*, 1:749–60.

27. The literature on the Sefire inscriptions is considerable. See, most importantly, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Aramaic Inscriptions of Sefire* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute Press, 1967); André Lemaire and Jean-Marie Durand, *Les Inscriptions Araméennes de Sfiré et l'Assyrie de Shamshi-ilu* (Geneva/Paris: Droz, 1984); and Hélène S. Sader, *Les États Araméens de Syrie* (Beirut: Steiner, 1987), 138–42.

28. On the Syrian campaigns of Tiglath-pileser, see Hawkins, "Neo-Hittite States," 410–13.

David.²⁹ It appears from these texts that Zobah was the dominant political power in southern Syria during the early part of the tenth century. Following an outbreak of war between Ammon and Israel, Hadadezer came to the support of Ammon, along with a number of vassals, and fought to a stalemate with the Israelites (2 Sam. 10:6–14 || 1 Chron. 19:6–15). Hadadezer returned to Zobah, where he gathered new troops and prepared to meet Israel again (2 Sam. 10:15–19 || 1 Chron. 19:16–19). But David marched his army northward and met Hadadezer at Helam, where the army of Zobah was decisively defeated. Several of Hadadezer's allies and vassals subsequently sued for peace and became David's vassals.

A further confrontation between David and Hadadezer is described in 2 Samuel 8:3–8 || 1 Chronicles 18:3–8. Although some scholars argue that this is simply a variant account of the Battle of Helam, most view it as a separate battle, which, however, is usually thought to have occurred after those described in 2 Samuel 10. First Chronicles 8:3 places this final battle near Hamath in central Syria, and it is described as a decisive defeat for Hadadezer. It is during the course of this conflict that Aram Damascus makes its first appearance in the Hebrew Bible. According to 2 Samuel 8:5–6, troops from Damascus were sent to aid Hadadezer, but David defeated them as well and went on to place Israelite garrisons in Damascus, apparently making it an occupied territory.

Aram Damascus, usually called simply Aram in the Hebrew Bible ("Syria" in many translations) was the part of the Aramean world that had the greatest effect on biblical Israel. It was regularly the most powerful state that bordered on Israel, and the two nations had a close and complex relationship from the tenth through the eighth centuries. Unfortunately, historical information about this kingdom is limited almost exclusively to external sources, most especially the Hebrew Bible and the Assyrian inscriptions. With the exception of a few very short inscriptions that may have originated from there, no documents from Aram Damascus itself have yet been discovered,³⁰ and no

excavations in Damascus have yet reached the Iron Age levels of the Aramean city. Thus, like the northern Aramean states, our knowledge of this nation is largely limited to its international relations in the period from approximately 1000 to 732, when it was incorporated into the Assyrian Empire and ceased to be an independent state.

Following David's defeat of Aram Damascus, we hear nothing further from Damascus until the period of Solomon. Sometime during Solomon's reign, a former officer of Hadadezer of Zobah named Rezon, son of Eliada, gathered together an army, seized Damascus, and proclaimed himself king (1 Kings 11:23–24). Solomon was either unwilling or unable to dislodge this rebel, and Damascus became an independent state.

Following Solomon's death, the united Israelite kingdom collapsed and its empire faded away. The rulers in Damascus took advantage of the power vacuum that followed to become a significant influence in the region. By the early ninth century, Aram, under King Bir-Hadad I (biblical Ben-Hadad) was powerful enough (in league with Judah) to stage an attack on the northern kingdom of Israel and temporarily capture a number of important towns in the northern part of the country (1 Kings 15:16–22).³¹

The peak of Damascus's political power came during the middle and final years of the ninth century. As the Assyrian threat expanded during the early days of Shalmaneser III (858–824), a defensive coalition was formed by twelve western states, led by Hadad-idr of Aram Damascus, along with Irhulena of Hamath and Ahab of Israel. In 853 Shalmaneser marched into the territory of Hamath, where he met this coalition near Qarqar. The two sides appear to have fought to a stalemate, since Shalmaneser did not proceed any further south, but turned westward briefly and then returned to Assyria.³² Only after four years did Shalmaneser attempt to march again into central

29. On Zobah, see Abraham Malamat, "Aspects of the Foreign Policies of David and Solomon," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 22 (1963): 1–6, revised in *Das davidische und salomonische Königreich und seine Beziehungen zu Ägypten und Syrien: Zur Entstehung eines Grossreichs* (Vienna: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1983), 31–39. See also Wayne T. Pitard, *Ancient Damascus* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1987), 89–95.

30. The only probable inscriptions from Damascus are two ivories with brief inscriptions of Hazael on their backs, found among the booty taken by the Assyrians and left at Til Barsip in one case and at Calah in the other. The most famous inscription attributed to a Damascene king is the Melqart of Bir-Hadad Stele, a late ninth- or early eighth-century inscription found just north of Aleppo in the 1930s. New examination of that inscription, however, makes it doubtful that it can be attributed to a king of Aram Damascus; see Wayne T. Pitard, "The Identity of the Bir-Hadad of the Melqart Stela," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Orient Research* 272

(1988): 3–21; Émile Puech, "La Stèle de Bar-Hadad à Melqart et les Rois d'Arpad," *Revue Biblique* 99 (1992): 311–34; and Joseph A. Fitzmyer and Stephen A. Kaufman, *An Aramaic Bibliography*, part 1: *Old, Official, and Biblical Aramaic* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 11. See below on two recently published possible Hazael inscriptions. As this book goes to press, preliminary reports have appeared concerning a fragmentary Aramaic stela found at Tell Dan (northern Israel) during the summer of 1993. The script has been dated to the ninth century, and the broken lines make reference to "the king of Israel," "the house of David," the god Hadad, and chariotry. There is a strong possibility that it was a victory stela of a king of Aram Damascus, placed at Dan during one of the periods when Damascus controlled that area (cf., e.g., 1 Kings 15:17–22). If so, this becomes the first monumental inscription from a Damascene ruler. The stela is scheduled for publication in *Israel Exploration Journal*.

31. On the reign of this king, see Pitard, *Ancient Damascus*, 107–14. The newly discovered stela from Tell Dan may refer to this event.

32. Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia*, 1:611.

Syria, and he was again met and held back by the coalition under Hadad-ʿidr. Shalmaneser's inscriptions describe two further campaigns to that region in 848 and 843, but Hadad-ʿidr's coalition kept the Assyrians out of central Syria on each occasion. Hadad-ʿidr's continued leadership in this alliance indicates that Aram was the predominant political power of central Syria and Palestine during this period.³³

A substantial controversy exists concerning the relation between Hadad-ʿidr of the Assyrian inscriptions and the king of Aram called Ben-Hadad in 1 Kings 20 and 22. These two chapters describe a series of conflicts between Israel and Aram that are said to have taken place during the last five years of the reign of Ahab of Israel, that is, between 858 and 853, the years just preceding the Battle of Qarqar. If these chapters are reliable, it would be necessary to conclude that the Ben-Hadad in 1 Kings 20 (called Ben-Hadad II by many scholars) should be identified with Hadad-ʿidr, and that a serious state of war existed between these two nations, even during the year of the Battle of Qarqar.

However, there are a number of indications in these chapters that they do not actually describe events of the reign of Ahab, but rather belong to the time of Joash, some fifty years later.³⁴ For example, the description of the political situation in 1 Kings 20, in which the king of Israel is portrayed as having been completely dominated by Aram Damascus, is quite different from the conditions that other biblical passages and extrabiblical sources indicate existed during Ahab's reign. Shalmaneser's Monolith Inscription, which gives the most complete account of the Battle at Qarqar, in which Ahab took part, reports that Ahab furnished two thousand chariots and ten thousand foot-soldiers for the battle. This is the largest contingent of chariots provided by any member of the coalition, and even if the figure is an exaggeration (as it probably is) this contrasts dramatically to the portrait of the weak king of Israel in 1 Kings 20. In addition, while the king and his father in 1 Kings 20 are portrayed as vassals of the king of Aram (see esp. 20:34), biblical and extrabiblical sources indicate that Omri and Ahab were two of the most powerful kings of Israel. The Mesha Stele from Moab indicates that Omri had reduced

Moab to vassalhood, something quite unlikely if he himself were under Aramean domination.³⁵ The biblical accounts of the building of Samaria as the new Israelite capital during Omri's reign (1 Kings 16:24) and the wealth of Ahab's court (1 Kings 22:39) also contrast significantly with the portrayal of the kings in 1 Kings 20. Further, the archeological evidence of major public building projects throughout Israel during Ahab's reign demonstrates that Israel was economically prosperous during this time.³⁶

While 1 Kings 20 seems out of place in the reigns of Omri and Ahab, it fits perfectly into the period of Joahaz and Joash (814–782), when Israel was dominated by Aram under kings Hazael and his son, another Bir-Hadad (Hebrew Ben-Hadad; see 2 Kings 13:22–25). During the reign of Bir-Hadad, a greatly weakened Israel was able to overthrow Aramean overlordship in a decisive battle near the town of Aphek (2 Kings 13:17). In 1 Kings 20:26–30, the decisive battle also takes place at Aphek, and the description in 20:34 of the king's father as having been under the domination of Ben-Hadad's father fits perfectly into this period. It thus appears that the account in 1 Kings 20 should not be used to illuminate the relations between Ahab and the kingdom of Aram. In a similar way, the account of the battle at Ramoth Gilead in 1 Kings 22 seems problematic as well and should also be considered highly suspect.³⁷ It appears unlikely that there was a major war between Aram and Israel during the reign of Ahab. Rather, Ben-Hadad of 1 Kings 20 should be identified with Bir-Hadad, son of Hazael, from the early eighth century, not with Hadad-ʿidr of the mid-ninth century.

Thus there does not appear to have been a Bir-Hadad on the throne in Damascus during the middle part of the ninth century. Hadad-ʿidr was succeeded (most likely) by Hazael, a usurper, around 842.³⁸ At this point the coalition that had successfully held back the Assyrians for eleven years fell apart. Hamath, the major member of the coalition to the north, appears to have reached a separate agreement with Assyria, while to the south a border war broke out between Aram and Israel. During the course of this war, a conspiracy against King Joram of Israel came to fruition when the general, Jehu, assassinated the king and wiped out the family of Omri (2 Kings 9–10). This

33. On the reign of Hadad-ʿidr, see Pitard, *Ancient Damascus*, 125–38.

34. For a detailed discussion of the position taken here, see *ibid.*, 114–25. See also J. Maxwell Miller, "The Elisha Cycle and the Accounts of the Omride Wars," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 85 (1966): 442–43, where it is proposed that the king of Israel should be identified with Joahaz, the father of Joash, rather than Joash. For an influential reconstruction of this period, which assumes the identity of Hadad-ʿidr and the Ben-Hadad of 1 Kings 20 and 22, see Benjamin Mazar, "The Aramean Empire and Its Relations with Israel," trans. Ben-zion Gold, *Biblical Archaeologist* 25 (1962): 106–16. The traditional interpretation may also be found in John Bright, *A History of Israel*, 3d ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981), 242–43.

35. ANET 320–21.

36. For a summary of the finds of this period, see Amihai Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible 10,000–586 B.C.E.* (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 406–16. On new evidence for substantial public works during the reign of Ahab at Dor, see Ephraim Stern, "Hazor, Dor and Megiddo in the Time of Ahab and under Assyrian Rule," *Israel Exploration Journal* 40 (1990): 16–22.

37. Miller, "Elisha Cycle," 444–46; *idem*, "The Rest of the Acts of Jehoahaz (1 Kings 20, 22:1–38)," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 80 (1968): 340–41.

38. On the complexities surrounding the rise of Hazael, see Pitard, *Ancient Damascus*, 132–38.

revolution, on top of the animosity between Aram and Israel over the border, apparently led Israel to drop out of the alliance as well. So when Shalmaneser returned to Syria in 841, he found only Hazael of Damascus prepared to oppose him.³⁹ In a battle near Mount Senir (probably Jebel ez-Zabadani or Jebel esh-Sharqi to the north of Damascus, rather than the Mount Hermon region, which is the usual identification of Senir),⁴⁰ Hazael was defeated and forced to retreat into Damascus. Shalmaneser besieged Damascus briefly and ravaged its fertile fields, but was unable to capture the city. Instead he marched westward to the coast, where he received the submission of several kings, including Jehu.⁴¹

Shalmaneser apparently returned twice, in 838 and 837, to subdue Aram, but was unable to do so. Virtually no information has been preserved concerning these two confrontations.⁴² But after 837, Shalmaneser turned his attention to lands in the north, and southern Syria and Palestine had thirty years of peace from Assyria. Once the Assyrian threat subsided, Hazael began a policy of expansion into Palestine. He was able to annex Israel's Transjordanian territories (2 Kings 10:32–33) and to apparently force Israel into vassalage. According to the Lucianic texts of the Septuagint (following 2 Kings 13:22), Hazael also conquered Philistia and then turned eastward toward Judah. King Jehoash of Judah sent Hazael a large tribute, thereby presumably becoming a vassal, after which Hazael withdrew from Jerusalem (2 Kings 12:17–18 [MT 12:18–19]).

Thus, during the reign of Hazael, Aram became a significant empire that covered much if not all of southern Syria and Palestine. Some scholars also argue that Hazael gained hegemony over much of northern Syria as well, but until recently there was very little evidence of Hazael's influence in the north.⁴³ A bronze ornament for a horse's forehead, found on the Greek island of Samos, has an Aramaic inscription of the late ninth or early eighth century: *zy ntn hdd lmr'n hz'l mn 'mq bšnt 'dh mr'n nhr* ("that which Hadad gave our lord Hazael from the Valley [*'mq*] in the year our lord crossed the river").⁴⁴ Part of booty carried off from the Near East to Samos

at some later date, the inscription is interpreted as an indication that Hazael of Aram Damascus campaigned in northern Syria, took booty from Umqi (*'mq*) = Patina, and probably marched his army across the Euphrates ("the River").

A certain amount of caution is worthwhile in dealing with this inscription. First, nothing on the inscription assures that the Hazael of this inscription is Hazael of Damascus (Hazael was a popular West Semitic name). Second, if *mn 'mq* is to be understood as the location whence the ornament came, the noun *'mq* ("the Valley") is ambiguous. The assumption has been that it refers to the state of Umqi or Unqi in northern Syria, and this may be correct. However, note should be made that the valley between the Lebanon Mountains and the Anti-Lebanon Mountains directly west of Damascus was known as *'Amqi* in the Late Bronze Age and may have retained that name into the first millennium (cf. Judg. 18:28). Third, it is not certain which river is referred to here. Although the Euphrates is the river *par excellence* in Near Eastern inscriptions, the term can be used for other rivers as well. Finally, there are clear indications that Bit-Agusi was the dominant power in northern Syria at least during the reign of Shamshi-Adad V (823–811) and the early years of the reign of Adad-nirari III (810–783). This was the state that led the important anti-Assyrian coalition that met Adad-nirari in 805. There is no hint that At-tarshumki was a vassal to anyone at this time. For these reasons, the new inscription must be used with great caution in reconstructing the extent of Hazael's empire.

Hazael was succeeded, probably around 800, by his son Bir-Hadad (often called Ben-Hadad III in the literature, since Hadad-*idr* was usually identified as a Ben-Hadad as well). The events of Bir-Hadad's reign are known from several sources: 1–2 Kings, Assyrian inscriptions of Adad-nirari III, and an Aramaic inscription of King Zakkur of Hamath and Luash. Each of these sources describes a different military defeat of Bir-Hadad, and together they clearly suggest a steep decline of Aram's power during this reign. Although there are no clear indications of the chronological order in which the events from the three sources occurred, one may speculate that those described in the Zakkur inscription occurred first.⁴⁵ The inscription describes an attack made on Zakkur by a coalition of states to the north and south of Hamath, led by Bir-Hadad of Damascus and apparently the king of Bit-Agusi in the north. The coalition attempted to capture Zakkur's capital in Luash, but was unable to do so. There is some indication in the broken part of the inscription

45. For a convenient translation, see ANET 655–56. The name of the king has traditionally been vocalized as Zakir. However, recently discovered cuneiform texts show that it was pronounced Zakkur.

39. Ibid., 146–48.

40. Cf. Sader, *Les États Araméens de Syrie*, 265.

41. Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia*, 1:672.

42. Pitard, *Ancient Damascus*, 148–50.

43. Alfred Jepsen, "Israel und Damaskus," *Archiv für Orientforschung* 14 (1941–45): 168; Mazar, "Aramean Empire," 108–16. See also Pitard, *Ancient Damascus*, 152–58.

44. See Israel Eph'al and Joseph Naveh, "Hazael's Booty Inscriptions," *Israel Exploration Journal* 39 (1989): 192–200; François Bron and André Lemaire, "Les Inscriptions Araméennes de Hazael," *Revue d'Assyriologie* 83 (1989): 35–44. A second Aramaic inscription, on a blinker that was found early this century at Eretria (in Greece) but only recently published, may have a very similar text, but it is badly damaged. See the above articles.

that Zakkur was saved by the timely arrival of Assyrian troops to support him, but this is not certain.

Whether or not the Assyrians were responsible for Bir-Hadad's first defeat, they were responsible for his second one. Inscriptions of Adad-nirari III report that the Assyrian king personally entered Damascus, following a siege of the city, and received a substantial booty from the king of Aram, who is called Mar'i in the Assyrian inscriptions. Mar'i, which in Aramaic means "my lord," is almost certainly a title of Bir-Hadad.⁴⁶

Bir-Hadad's third major defeat came at the hands of the Israelites, who regained their autonomy during this time, following decades of domination by Damascus (2 Kings 13:22–25). As mentioned above, 1 Kings 20 should probably be understood as a more detailed account of the battles between Joash and Bir-Hadad that led to Israelite independence.

There is no information about the rest of the Aramean Empire during Bir-Hadad's reign. If it had stretched to northern Syria, all of that was surely lost after the campaigns of Adad-nirari. In the south, the breaking away of Israel may have been followed by the collapse of the rest of the southern empire. No sources are preserved from the latter part of Bir-Hadad's reign, and it is not known how long he ruled. It is clear that the first half of the eighth century was a bad period for Aram. In 773 the Assyrians once again attacked Damascus, whose king, an otherwise unknown Hadianu, was forced to pay a large tribute.⁴⁷ Israel experienced a significant political revival during the reign of Jeroboam II (782–748) and appears to have actually placed Aram under vassaldom for a while (2 Kings 14:25–28).

Damascus's final moment of political influence began about the middle of the eighth century, with the reign of Aram's last king, called Rezin in the Bible, but pronounced more like Radyan in Aramaic. It is not certain when Radyan came to the throne, but he was king by 740 or 739, when his name occurs in a tribute list of Tiglath-pileser III of Assyria. During the years 737–735, while Tiglath-pileser was occupied elsewhere in his empire, Radyan formed a new anti-Assyrian coalition of Syro-Palestinian states, including the Phoenician city-state of Tyre, Ashkelon, and Israel.⁴⁸ Apparently in an attempt to force Judah to join the coalition, Radyan and Pekah of Israel at-

46. See Hayim Tadmor, "The Historical Inscriptions of Adad-nirari III," *Iraq* 35 (1973): 141–50.

47. The Pazarcik Stele, upon which this information is inscribed, is published in Veysel Donbaz, "Two Neo-Assyrian Stelae in the Antakya and Kahramanmaraş Museums," *Annual Review of the Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia Project* 8 (1990): 5–18.

48. On this reign, see Pitard, *Ancient Damascus*, 179–89. A more speculative reconstruction of the reign of Radyan may be found in J. Maxwell Miller and John H. Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), 323–26.

tacked Judah and besieged Jerusalem (2 Kings 15:37; 16:5–9). Their plan, according to Isaiah 7:6, was to depose the young king Ahaz and replace him with a (presumably anti-Assyrian) puppet ruler named Tabeel, who would do their bidding. Ahaz, who apparently was not a vassal of Assyria at this point, immediately appealed to Tiglath-pileser for help. Tiglath-pileser marched into Syria in 734 and appears to have captured the coastal regions that belonged to the anti-Assyrian coalition (including Tyre and Philistia) during that campaign. The campaigns of 733 and 732 were directed largely at Aram Damascus, the leader of the coalition, and finally Damascus was captured in 732. Tiglath-pileser devastated the country, Radyan was executed, and the state of Aram was annexed into the Assyrian Empire as a province. This brought an end to the independent state of Aram.

Thus, from the reign of Tiglath-pileser III, virtually all of the Aramean states were part of the Assyrian provincial system, and by early in the reign of Sargon II (721–705), when the latter crushed a rebellion led by Hamath and including the recently annexed provinces of Arpad, Simirra, and Damascus, all of Syria was under Assyrian sovereignty.⁴⁹ During most of the seventh century, the height of Assyrian power, the Aramean provinces remained under tight control. By the time of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, very little trace of the old state structure remained.

Arameans in Southern Mesopotamia

Information concerning the Arameans in Babylonia is limited, but the available sources indicate that Aramean groups existed in Babylonia from the beginning of the first millennium and that they were largely organized as nomadic pastoral groups. Several texts indicate that these pastoralists often resorted to raiding and plundering caravans and towns. During the reign of the Babylonian king Adad-apla-iddina (1068–1047), Aramean and Sutean brigands apparently raided the Babylonian shrine cities of Sippar and Nippur. Other references to Aramean assaults and belligerence are found in later sources as well.⁵⁰

But eighth-century documents also show that large numbers of Arameans lived in cities and towns, some in specifically Aramean domains and others in the major Babylonian cities.⁵¹ References to disputes between Arameans and others over ownership of fields are found from the eighth century as well.

49. Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia*, 2:55.

50. See Brinkman, *Political History*, 279.

51. *Ibid.*, 268–81.

By the ninth century, the Aramean tribal groups were often allied with the Babylonians against the Assyrians, and although Tiglath-pileser III defeated thirty-six Aramean tribes during his campaigns in Babylonia, the tribes apparently maintained a fiercely independent streak, for they are listed as rebels during the succeeding reigns of Sargon II and Sennacherib. They also played a role in the great rebellion of Babylonia against Ashurbanipal in 652–648.⁵²

In all, it appears that the Arameans played a supplementary role in Babylonia rather than a dominant one, with the political dominance falling to the Chaldean tribes. But their cultural influence was quite significant in the realm of language, in that by the late eighth century Aramaic had become the predominant language in Babylonia, while Akkadian was relegated largely to government and literary use. There are a large number of loanwords and a few institutions that came into Babylonian culture from the Arameans during this period.⁵³

Civilization

It is in many ways impossible with our current sources of information to produce more than a vague sketch of Aramean culture. In fact, one cannot refer to a single "Aramean culture," since each of the major Aramean groups was distinctive and rose in a specific context and set of circumstances.

The Arameans seem to have made few major contributions to political structure or practice in the Near East. This is not surprising, since in spite of the extent of their presence throughout the Fertile Crescent, they were never linked into a single political unit. The small state structure and the use of alliances and coalitions with other small states cannot be considered specifically Aramean. There is no indication that the Arameans ever attempted to set up alliances based strictly on their ethnic relationships.⁵⁴ A few elements of Aramean (and perhaps West Semitic) statecraft were, however, adopted eventually by the Assyrians, including the loyalty oath, called *adê* in Akkadian, which is a loanword from the Aramaic *dy*.⁵⁵

52. See John A. Brinkman, *Prelude to Empire: Babylonian Society and Politics, 747–626 B.C.* (Philadelphia: University Museum, 1984), 45–65, 94–101.

53. See *ibid.*, 13–14; and Jonas C. Greenfield, "Babylonian-Aramaic Relationship," in *Mesopotamien und seine Nachbarn: Politische und kulturelle Wechselbeziehungen im alten Vorderasien vom 4. bis 1. Jahrtausend v. Chr.*, ed. Hans Jörg Nissen and Johannes Renger, 2d ed., 25th Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale (Berlin: Reimer, 1987), 471–82.

54. See the discussion in Sader, *Les États Araméens de Syrie*, 278–81.

55. See Hayim Tadmor, "The Aramaization of Assyria: Aspects of Western Impact," in *Mesopotamien und seine Nachbarn: Politische und kulturelle Wechselbeziehungen im alten Vorderasien vom 4. bis 1. Jahrtausend v. Chr.*, ed. Hans Jörg Nissen and Johannes Renger, 2d ed., 25th Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale (Berlin: Reimer, 1987), 455–58.

Nor was Aramean art and architecture very influential in the ancient world. It appears that much of north Aramean art was adopted and adapted from the surviving Hittite traditions that continued to exist in the Neo-Hittite states. As soon as Assyria began to take control of the west, art in the vassal states became an imitation of Assyrian styles. South Aramean (i.e., Damascene) art is even less well known. Only a few pieces of ivory and one stone relief can be identified as such so far. These pieces show major stylistic borrowing from Phoenicia, mixed with certain aspects of north Syrian styles. Little study has been done on determining specifically Aramean characteristics of architecture, but there seems to be little major contribution in this area as well. Little is known of Aramean art and architecture in Babylonia, either. It appears to have been largely swallowed up by the Mesopotamian tradition.⁵⁶

Aramean religion seems to have been the descendant of the West Semitic religion of the second millennium.⁵⁷ The gods of the Arameans are the West Semitic gods, supplemented in

56. On Aramean and Syrian art in general, see Richard D. Barnett, *A Catalogue of the Nimrud Ivories* (London: British Museum, 1957), 31–62; Irene J. Winter, "Phoenician and North Syrian Ivory Carving in Historical Context: Questions of Style and Distribution," *Iraq* 39 (1976): 1–22; *idem*, "Is There a South Syrian Style of Ivory Carving in the Early First Millennium B.C.?" *Iraq* 43 (1981): 101–30; and Ekrem Akurgal, "Aramean and Phoenician Stylistic and Iconographic Elements in Neo-Hittite Art," in *Temples and High Places in Biblical Times*, ed. Avraham Biran (Jerusalem: Nelson Glueck School of Biblical Archaeology, Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion, 1981), 131–39. Note also the brief discussion of Babylonian art and architecture in Brinkman, *Prelude to Empire*, 120–21.

57. See Jonas C. Greenfield, "Aspects of Aramean Religion," in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross*, ed. Patrick D. Miller Jr., Paul D. Hanson, and S. Dean McBride (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 67–78.



Tell Fekheriyeh statue with bilingual Assyrian-Aramaic inscription, 9th century B.C. (height: 5' 5")

Courtesy of Wayne T. Pitard

some cases with the gods of the neighboring cultures. From the surviving Aramaic inscriptions, it seems clear that Hadad was the preeminent deity of many of the Aramean tribes. He was the recipient of special praise in the Tell Fekheriyeh inscription of Haddiyi'i, the subject of the giant Hadad statue erected by Panamu of Sam'al, and the national deity of Aram Damascus under the name Hadad-Rimmon (probably pronounced *rammān*, "Hadad the Thunderer"), according to 2 Kings 5:18 (cf. Zech. 12:11). The moon god, Sin/Shahar, the Lord of Haran, is prominent in several inscriptions, as are El, Rakib-el, Shamash, and Reshep.

The major legacy of the Aramean civilization was its language and script. In these areas, the Arameans had an extraordinary impact on the Near East, well beyond their political legacy. Aramaic was the most widely spoken language in Syria and Upper Mesopotamia during the first centuries of the first millennium. As full-fledged states began to appear, it is natural that monumental inscriptions should also be forthcoming. The earliest Aramaic inscriptions found thus far date to the mid-ninth century.⁵⁸ The script of the early inscriptions in Syria indicates that it was borrowed from the Phoenicians. This borrowing probably occurred as early as the late eleventh or early tenth century, although very little is known about this process. The most significant clue to the date of the borrowing is the recently discovered statue of Haddiyi'i, a ninth-century Aramean governor of Guzanu and Sikanu in Bit-Bahiani, which has a bilingual, Assyrian-Aramaic inscription incised on the skirt of the ruler.⁵⁹ The Aramaic inscription on this statue is written in an archaic form of the script that looks much like eleventh-century Phoenician script, in spite of the statue's almost certain dating to the ninth century. Other Aramaic inscriptions from the ninth century show a much more developed script, one that is very similar to ninth-century Phoenician script. This situation reflects a continued influence from the Phoenician coast among the western Aramean and Neo-Hittite states that appears not to have extended into the area of Bit-Bahiani.⁶⁰ It is only in the eighth century when substan-

58. The new inscription from Tell Dan may date to the early ninth century, but this is as yet uncertain. A convenient translation of the major early Aramaic inscriptions may be found in John C. L. Gibson, *Textbook of Syrian Semitic Inscriptions*, vol. 2: *Aramaic Inscriptions* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975). See also the recent survey by Scott C. Layton, "Old Aramaic Inscriptions," *Biblical Archaeologist* 51 (1988): 172-89.

59. On this statue, see Ali Abou-Assaf, Pierre Bordreuil, and Alan R. Millard, *La Statue de Tell Fekheriyeh et Son Inscription Bilingue Assyro-Araméenne* (Paris: Éditions Recherche sur les Civilisations, 1982); and Alan R. Millard and Pierre Bordreuil, "A Statue from Syria with Assyrian and Aramaic Inscriptions," *Biblical Archaeologist* 45 (1982): 135-41.

60. For a discussion of the Phoenician cultural and economic presence in northern Syria during the ninth century, see Pitard, "Identity of Bir-Hadad," 13-16.

tial characteristics that may be called specifically Aramean begin to emerge in the script.⁶¹

The Arameans were the first to begin using some of the alphabetic letters to indicate long vowel sounds (the so-called *matres lectionis*). This important contribution to writing was slowly adopted by other cultures, including Israel. Eventually, the Aramaic script itself came into common use throughout Syria-Palestine as the older national scripts declined. The square script that was commonly used in Judea by the third century and is the ancestor of the modern Hebrew book script, is actually a descendent of Aramaic, rather than the archaic Israelite script.⁶²

But it is the language itself that had the most wide-ranging impact on the Near East. Because of the Assyrian policy of deporting large numbers of people from their homelands into Assyria, a substantial part of the Assyrian population by the eighth century was Aramean, and this had an enormous impact on Assyria from that time onward.⁶³ By the mid-eighth century, Aramaic was being used for official communication between Assyria and the west. The Assyrians made regular use of Aramean scribes who wrote in Aramaic on papyrus. It has also become increasingly apparent that during the Neo-Babylonian period Aramaic was the most common spoken language in Babylonia, while Akkadian was largely a literary language.⁶⁴ By the time of the Persian Empire, Aramaic, as the most widespread language in the Near East, became the *lingua franca* of the empire. The dialect used by the Persian chancellery became widespread throughout the Near East and was used not only for official Persian documents, but for numerous literary purposes. It is this official Aramaic that is found in the Aramaic sections of Ezra and (in a later form) Daniel, as well as in numerous papyrus documents discovered in Egypt, including the famous Elephantine texts, which include the records of a Jewish military colony of the fifth century.⁶⁵ In Palestine, Aramaic documents of the

61. On the Aramaic script, see Joseph Naveh, "The Development of the Aramaic Script," *Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities* 5 (1971): 1-69.

62. On the Jewish scripts of the third century B.C. through the first century A.D., see Frank M. Cross, "The Development of the Jewish Scripts," in *The Bible and the Ancient Near East: Essays in Honor of William Foxwell Albright*, ed. G. Ernest Wright (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1961), 131-202.

63. On the deportations into Assyria, see Bustenay Oded, *Mass Deportations and Deportees in the Neo-Assyrian Empire* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1979), 18-32.

64. On the Aramaic influence on Mesopotamian culture, see Tadmor, "Aramaization of Assyria"; Alan R. Millard, "Assyrians and Arameans," *Iraq* 45 (1983): 101-8; and Greenfield, "Babylonian-Aramaic Relationship."

65. On Elephantine, see Bezalel Porten, *Archives from Elephantine: The Life of an Ancient Jewish Military Colony* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968); and Bezalel Porten and Jonas C. Greenfield, *Jews of Elephantine and Arameans of Syene* (Jerusalem: Academon, 1974).

fourth century have been found in the Wadi ed-Daliyeh, and the discoveries in the Qumran caves produced a significant number of Jewish Aramaic literary works.⁶⁶ Aramaic inscriptions and texts are known from widely dispersed areas such as Egypt, Arabia, Syria-Palestine, central Turkey, Mesopotamia, Iran, and even as far east as Afghanistan.⁶⁷

By Hellenistic times, Aramaic had replaced many of the local languages—including Hebrew—that had survived the Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian empires. As Aramaic became the primary language of Judea, translations of the biblical texts, called targumim, were produced and read alongside the original Hebrew texts in the synagogue.⁶⁸ Aramaic was probably the primary language used by Jesus of Nazareth⁶⁹ and came to be an important language for Jewish literature. The Syriac dialect of Aramaic played a significant role in eastern Christianity as well. Descendant dialects of Aramaic still survive as living languages in a few isolated towns of Syria.

Recommended Reading

During the past forty years, no one has attempted a full-scale history of all the Arameans. The last such work, by Dupont-Sommer, is still valuable. Recent histories deal with more restricted subjects. The Aramean states of Syria are discussed in the fine study by Sader, who covers Bit-Bahiani (Guzanu), Bit-Adini, Bit-Agusi, Sam'al, Hamath, and Aram Damascus. The same area is also discussed by Hawkins. A detailed study of Damascus is provided by Pitard. Reinhold also deals extensively with Aram-Damascus. On Aram Zobah, see Malamet. No general study of the Arameans of southern Meso-

66. On the ed-Daliyeh documents, see the following works by Frank M. Cross: "Papyri of the Fourth Century B.C. from Daliyeh," in *New Directions in Biblical Archaeology*, ed. David N. Freedman and Jonas C. Greenfield (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1969), 41–62; "The Papyri and Their Historical Implications," in *Discoveries in the Wadi ed-Daliyeh*, ed. Paul W. Lapp and Nancy L. Lapp (Cambridge, Mass.: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1974), 17–29, esp. 25–29; "A Report on the Samaria Papyri," in *Congress Volume: Jerusalem 1986*, ed. John A. Emerton, *Vetus Testamentum Supplement* 40 (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 17–26; and "Samaria Papyrus 1: An Aramaic Slave Conveyance of 335 B.C.E. Found in the Wadi ed-Daliyeh," *Eretz Israel* 18 (1985): 7*–17*. On the Qumran texts, see Geza Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Qumran in Perspective* (Cleveland: Collins & World, 1978).

67. For an introduction to the dialects of Aramaic from the earliest period to modern times, see Eduard Y. Kutscher, "Aramaic," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1971), 3:259–87.

68. A good introduction to the targumim may be found in Philip S. Alexander, "Jewish Aramaic Translations of Hebrew Scriptures," in *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. Martin J. Mulder (Assen/Maastricht: Van Gorcum/Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 217–53.

69. On the complex linguistic situation of the first century A.D., see Joseph Fitzmyer, "The Languages of Palestine in the First Century A.D.," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 32 (1970): 501–31.

potamia is available, but considerable information can be found in Brinkman's two works.

Very little has been written about Aramean culture, since so little is known of it. Translations of major Old Aramaic inscriptions may be found in Donner and Röllig and in Gibson. An excellent recent survey of Old Aramaic inscriptions with helpful bibliography is Layton. A comprehensive bibliography for Old, Official, and Biblical Aramaic has been compiled by Fitzmyer and Kaufman. A good general description of the Aramaic language may be found in Kutscher. On the religion of the Arameans, very little has been written; see, however, Greenfield, "Aspects of Aramean Religion." On the impact of Aramaic studies on the study of the Old Testament, see Greenfield, "Aramaic Studies and the Bible." For their impact on New Testament studies, see Fitzmyer.

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Philistines

David M. Howard Jr.

Now the rulers of the Philistines assembled to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god and to celebrate, saying, "Our god has delivered Samson, our enemy, into our hands."

—Judges 16:23

The Philistines are well known to readers of the Bible as adversaries of Israel during the days of the judges and the early monarchy. Archeology provides additional insights through literary texts (especially Egyptian), as well as material remains. The picture that emerges, particularly in recent scholarship, is one of a mixed group composed of peoples with different origins and whose material culture incorporated many different influences.

Name

The term *Philistine* (as well as *Palestine*) comes from the Hebrew *pēlišṭî(m)*, which occurs 288 times in the Old Testament; the term *pēlešet* ("Philistia") occurs eight times. *Pēlišṭî(m)* is usually rendered as *allophuloi* ("strangers, foreigners") in the Greek versions and less frequently as *phulistiim*; it is found in Egyptian sources as *prst* ("Peleset") and in Assyrian sources as *pilisti* and *palastu*. Its original derivation or meaning is unknown. In modern English, *philistine* has come to mean "boorish" or "uncultured," in an exaggerated extrapolation from the biblical presentation of the Philistines.

Origins

Biblical Evidence

The Philistines first appear on the world stage in texts from the Bible, which place them in Canaan sometime around the end of the third millennium or