

**The Mystery of the Ten Lost Tribes:
A Critical Survey of Historical and Archaeological
Records relating to the People of Israel in Exile in
Syria, Mesopotamia and Persia up to ca. 300 BCE**

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By

Ziva Shavitsky

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P U B L I S H I N G

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To my husband Max

my children: Danny, Adrian, Leora and her husband Nigel

and my grand daughters: Amber and Marnie

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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>ABD</i>	<i>The Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>
<i>ABC</i>	<i>Anchor Bible Commentaries</i>
<i>ABL</i>	<i>Assyrian and Babylonian Letters Belonging to the Kouyunjik Collections of the British Museum</i>
<i>ADD</i>	<i>Assyrian Deeds and Documents Recording the Transfer of Property, Including the So-Called Private Contracts, Legal Decisions and Proclamations Preserved in the Kouyunjik Collections of the British Museum, Chiefly of the 7th Century BC, 2nd edn</i>
<i>AfO</i>	<i>Archiv für Orientforschung</i>
<i>AHI I</i>	<i>Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions, Vol. 1</i>
<i>ANE</i>	<i>Ancient Near East/Eastern</i>
<i>ANET</i> ³	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament, 3rd edn</i>
<i>ARAB</i>	<i>Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia</i>
<i>ARU</i>	<i>Assyrische Rechtsurkunden im Umschrift und Uebersetzung, nebst einem Index der Personen-Namen und Rechtserläuterungen</i>
<i>AUSS</i>	<i>Andrews University Seminary Studies</i>
<i>b. Megillah</i>	<i>Babylonian Talmud Megillah</i>
<i>b. Sukkah</i>	<i>Babylonian Talmud Sukkah</i>
<i>b. Yoma</i>	<i>Babylonian Talmud Yoma</i>
<i>BA</i>	<i>The Biblical Archaeologist</i>
<i>BARev</i>	<i>Biblical Archaeologist Review</i>
<i>BASOR</i>	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
<i>BBLAK</i>	<i>Beiträge zur biblischen Landes-und Altertumskunde</i>

<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
<i>BM</i>	<i>British Museum number</i>
<i>BN</i>	<i>Biblische Notizen</i>
<i>BR</i>	<i>Bible Review</i>
<i>CAH</i>	<i>Cambridge Ancient History</i>
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>CTN III</i>	<i>Cuneiform Tablets from Nimrud III: The Tablets from Fort Shalmaneser</i>
<i>EI</i>	<i>Eretz Israel</i>
<i>EM</i>	<i>Entziklopedia Mikrait [Biblical Encyclopedia]</i>
<i>FRLANT</i>	<i>Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments</i>
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
<i>ICC</i>	<i>The International Critical Commentary</i>
<i>IEJ</i>	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
<i>ISBE</i>	<i>The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia</i>
<i>J. Gittin</i>	<i>Talmud Yerushalmi (Jerusalem) Gittin</i>
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JCS</i>	<i>Journal of Cuneiform Studies</i>
<i>JNES</i>	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
<i>JNSL</i>	<i>Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages</i>
<i>Jos. Ant.</i>	<i>The Antiquities of the Jews, Josephus</i>
<i>Jos. Apion</i>	<i>Against Apion, Josephus</i>
<i>Jos. Wars</i>	<i>The Wars of the Jews, Josephus</i>
<i>JQR</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>

<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
<i>JSOTSup</i>	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
<i>KJV</i>	<i>King James Version</i>
<i>KS</i>	<i>Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte des Volkes Israel</i>
<i>m. Aboth</i>	<i>Mishnah Aboth</i>
<i>m. Baba Batra</i>	<i>Mishnah Baba Batra</i>
<i>m. Baba Kama</i>	<i>Mishnah Baba Kama</i>
<i>ND</i>	<i>Nimrud Documents</i>
<i>PEQ</i>	<i>Palestine Exploration Journal</i>
<i>PF</i>	<i>Persopolis Fortification</i>
<i>RA</i>	<i>Revue d'Assyriologie et d'Archéologie Orientale</i>
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
<i>SAA</i>	<i>State Archives of Assyria</i>
<i>SBLMS</i>	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
<i>ScrH</i>	<i>Scripta Hierosolymitana</i>
<i>TA</i>	<i>Tel Aviv</i>
<i>TUAT</i>	<i>Texte aus der Umwelt des Alten Testaments</i>
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
<i>WO</i>	<i>Die Welt des Orients</i>
<i>WZKM</i>	<i>Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes</i>
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>ZDPV</i>	<i>Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins</i>
<i>ZKTh</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie</i>

INTRODUCTION

It can hardly be claimed that there is anything novel in an attempt to trace the story of Israel and Judah in exile in countries to the east of Land of Israel. Still, the story needs to be re-told from time to time, because of advances in our understanding of the ancient Near East (ANE).

It is the aim of this book to trace the history of Israel and Judah in exile from Davidic times to about the middle of the 3rd century BCE. The area of concern stretches from Syria (Aram) to Iran (Persia) and includes both north and south Mesopotamia, i.e. Assyria and Babylonia.

We have undertaken to re-consider the discussions of an earlier generation of scholars, to assemble the historical material that has been available for many years, and to present it in a systematic manner. More recently, new material has been published. Indeed, there is a continuing process of discovery. Archaeological work is shedding new light on hitherto unexplored areas of history. Documentary evidence that has become available more recently is used to supplement the records that were available to earlier scholars.

Sources of Information

In this book, Israel and Judah are treated separately. The first major source of information considered is the Bible. The biblical records are then supplemented by the annals of those nations in whose midst the captives dwelt, namely Assyria, Babylonia and Persia. Attention is also drawn to material in the books of the Apocrypha, in the Talmud and in the Midrash. This latter material, especially, requires critical examination as to its authenticity and historical accuracy. Furthermore, the work of the Jewish historian, Josephus, is taken into account.

Other invaluable sources of information are the tablet records, ostraca, seals and coins that have been found during archaeological excavations in Assyria, Babylonia and Persia, some of which have been discovered only in recent times.

Scholarly interest was renewed after the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947. In the eleven caves near Qumran, north-west of the Dead

Sea, parts of more than 700 ancient Jewish manuscripts were discovered. These had been written in the same period as the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, mostly in Hebrew, with a lesser number in Aramaic and even fewer in Greek. The Dead Sea Scrolls, as they came to be known, are assumed to have been the library of a sectarian community at Qumran. The scrolls survived the Roman ravaging of Judea in the years 68-70 CE, because they were hidden in caves. They have been a major focus of scholarly and general interest for the last half-century.¹

This period lies outside the purview of our book. However, an important aspect of the Dead Sea Scrolls is that they were discovered in a known archaeological and sociological context, firmly fixing them in the Second Temple period. Before 1947, only medieval, Christian manuscripts of the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha were known, and they could be dated only on the basis of details contained in them. This is not always a dependable procedure. The Dead Sea Scrolls, stemming from a clearly established archaeological context, are vital in dating the writings accurately.²

While historically, these periods fall outside the dates covered in this study, it should be mentioned that the author is aware of the significance and importance of the various texts, discoveries and research in the area that throw more light on the time with which we are dealing.

Lest we stray from the area of the people of Israel in exile, it may be worth mentioning that while many of the works were written in the land of Israel, in Aramaic or Hebrew, others were written in Greek, and these Jewish Greek writings were produced and widespread in the Jewish diaspora of the time.

¹ Michael E. Stone, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha* (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2001 [cited July 2011]). Available from <http://www.mfa.gov.il/>.

² For an excellent discussion of the writings of the time that throws further light on the period, refer to Michael E. Stone (ed.), *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period: Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Qumran, Sectarian Writings, Philo, Josephus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984). For further study, it is interesting to refer to the earliest of the texts (Enoch) that may deal with the sects during the period of our timeframe of interest.

Sequence Followed

This book consists of chapters which can be read either in sequence or individually. In each enough references are given to related points found in the other chapters. The book as a whole follows a roughly chronological historical sequence. Commencing with the earliest contacts outside the borders of Israel and Judah, evidence of trade with other nations and migration is carefully considered. In particular, references to various captivities and to exiles living in other lands are collected. The discussion traces contacts with Aram, Assyria, Babylonia and Persia. After exploring early contacts with Aram, Israel and Judah are considered separately. Firstly, the biblical material relating to contacts between both Judah and Israel and other nations is examined, and then any non-biblical material. The distribution of the Jews in those areas to which they moved is investigated. Subsequent movements are considered, for example, as to whether any northern Israelite captives were eventually to be found among the Babylonian exiles. Finally, the fate of those who remained dispersed throughout the Near East, who came to be known as the ‘ten lost tribes’ is investigated. Recent attempts to retrace the wanderings of the ancient Israelites by isolating genetically-borne diseases peculiar to modern Jewish communities are also surveyed.³ The discussion concludes shortly after the end of the Achaemenid rule in Persia, upon the threshold of the coming of Alexander the Great of Macedon and the Hellenistic era.

It will be seen that this inquiry maintains an approach not usually encountered in biblical scholarship, in that we recount the history of Israel by utilising the biblical records largely intact. The reliability, historicity, literary purpose, and veracity of the biblical accounts are then tested in the light of contemporaneous ANE archaeological and literary evidence. This approach has produced interesting results, and it is felt that the picture emerging may contribute in some degree towards clarifying many questions and enigmas surrounding the wanderings of the people of Israel and Judah from their land.

In order to present an adequate picture of history, a degree of objective scholarship is required and, in writing the history of the ancient past, one must of necessity plunder the treasures gathered by others. It is hoped,

³ The author is well aware of the great strides and developments made in the area of genetics. This is not claiming to be a study of the latest findings in this area, but it was felt that the topic needs to be mentioned, even briefly, in the context of ‘following’ and tracing the people in exile and the far-flung places they reached.

however, that by examining previous reports in the light of new discoveries and additional source material, some new horizons may be opened regarding this very interesting and important period in the life of the Jewish nation. That alone justifies such an inquiry.

As wisely quoted in the correspondence between Judge Frankfurter and Franklin D. Roosevelt:

If the judgement of time must be corrected by that of posterity, it is no less true that the judgement of posterity must be corrected by that of time.⁴

⁴ James W. Vice, *The Reopening of the American Mind: On Skepticism and Constitutionalism* (Atlanta: Rodopi, 1998) 216.

Section I

Israel, Judah and Aram

CHAPTER 1

CONTACTS WITH ARAM

From what the Bible tells us, and from what we find in ancient documents, the communities of Israel and Judah were not insular. Contact with the outside world took place constantly, and people obviously moved from place to place for various reasons. Contacts with Aram are recorded frequently, and even where it is not specifically mentioned that people from Israel left their country or were taken from it, it is quite fair to surmise, as we shall see, that this did take place.¹

After the fall of the Hittite Empire (late 12th century), and with the weakening of such powers as Egypt and Assyria, the Arameans, who had for some centuries already settled in the Fertile Crescent, formed a number of small city-states, and eventually formed a coalition in Syria and northern Transjordan, first under the major kingdom of Aram-Zobah, and later under Aram-Damascus. We find evidence of Aramean penetration as far as northern and north-eastern Palestine; names like Beth-Rehob or perhaps Tob, and later the satellite states Maacah and Geshur, come to mind.²

¹ For an introduction to Aram see Wayne T. Pitard, 'Aram (Place)', *ABD*, ed. David Noel Freedman, Vol. 1 (New York: Doubleday, 1992) 6 vols, 338–341. There is not a vast amount of literature concerning Aram (see Gotthard G. G. Reinhold, *Die Beziehungen Altisraels zu den aramäischen Staaten in der israelitisch-judäischen Königszeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang 1989) 268, n. 2), and even less deals with the relations between Israel and Aram, actually looking at the people involved in these relations and thus not at movements of people between the countries.

² Benjamin Mazar, 'The Aramean Empire and Its Relations with Israel', *The Early Biblical Period: Historical Studies*, eds Benjamin Mazar, Shmuel Ahituv and Baruch A. Levine (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1986) 151–172; Wayne T. Pitard, *Ancient Damascus: A Historical Study of the Syrian City-State from Earliest Times until Its Fall to the Assyrians in 732 BCE* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1987) 87–89. For a detailed discussion see Reinhold, *Die Beziehungen Altisraels*, 68–74.

Aram only gradually became the influential empire that eventually replaced the Phoenician influence under which Israel had previously stood. Therefore, Phoenicia³ will be treated in this chapter alongside Aram. Archaeological explorations of Aram and of Phoenicia themselves are, however, as yet, only just beginning.⁴

Relations between Israel and Aram in the Days of King David (ca. 1005–965 BCE)⁵

With David's rise to power, some dramatic changes took place in Israel, as he made one important conquest after another.⁶ Not least among these was his victory over Hadadezer the Aramean, king of Aram-Zobah.⁷ In 2 Samuel 8:3–7, we read that:

David smote also Hadadezer the son of Rehob, king of Zobah, as he went to establish his dominion at the river Euphrates. And David took from him a thousand and seven hundred horsemen, and twenty thousand footmen; and David houghed all the chariot horses, but reserved of them for a hundred chariots. And when the Arameans of Damascus came to succour Hadadezer king of Zobah, David smote of the Arameans two and twenty

³ For an introduction to Phoenicia see Brian Peckham, 'Phoenicia, History Of', *ABD*, ed. David Noel Freedman, Vol. 5 (New York: Doubleday, 1992) 6 vols, 349–357; Philip C. Schmitz, 'Phoenician Religion', *ABD*, ed. David Noel Freedman, Vol. 5 (New York: Doubleday, 1992) 6 vols, 357–363.

⁴ Amihai Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible: 10,000–586 BCE* (New York: Doubleday, 1992) 531.

⁵ We will mainly use the chronology laid forth in Mordechai Cogan, 'Chronology', *ABD*, ed. David Noel Freedman, Vol. 1 (New York: Doubleday, 1992) 6 vols, 1002–1011, for consistency's sake. The issue of chronology is not relevant to our argument.

⁶ Abraham Malamat, 'A Political Look at the Kingdom of David and Solomon and Its Relations with Egypt', *Studies in the Period of David and Solomon and Other Essays* (Tokyo: Yamakawa-Shuppansha, 1982) 192–196. For a short survey of the consolidation of the state of Israel under David and Solomon, see Niels Peter Lemche, *Ancient Israel: A New History of Israelite Society* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988) 137–143. Actually Saul had already started to fight against the kings of Zobah (1 Sam. 14:47).

⁷ Pitard, *Ancient Damascus*, 95, argues that 'control of the trade routes was probably one of the major factors in the conflict between Zobah and Israel', thus the importance of this victory. Cf. Mazar, 'Aramean Empire', 156, who says that 'to gain control over the "King's Highway" ' was the policy of the kings of Damascus from Hadadezer on.

thousand men. Then David put garrisons in Aram of Damascus; and the Arameans became servants to David, and brought presents. And the LORD gave victory to David whithersoever he went. And David took the shields of gold that were on the servants of Hadadezer, and brought them to Jerusalem.⁸

In spite of the fact that David destroyed much of the plunder, there was also much that he kept: horsemen and footmen are listed as having been taken prisoner. On the other hand, on occasions where the Arameans had the upper hand, they would have taken prisoners from Israel into their own land. Furthermore, we read that David established garrisons in Damascus, which, as a junction of five important trade routes, was an international trade centre,⁹ and these would have been manned by his soldiers. Here, too, there is evidence of the infiltration of people from Israel into these lands. The same is true for the cities of Berothai, Tibhath and Cun (2 Sam. 8:8; 1 Chron. 18:8), where David mined copper.¹⁰ David's victories impressed the enemy, and it seems that Aram did not trouble Israel again until the time of Rezon, after the reign of David. Rezon was a military functionary in the militia of Hadadezer, who deserted his master's forces following their defeat at David's hand, and established a force at Damascus during Solomon's reign (1 Kgs 11:23–25).¹¹ At that time, the leadership over the Aramean states was transferred from Aram-Zobah into his hands at Aram-Damascus.¹²

Another reason for migrating was in order to seek refuge. The flight of David to neighbouring countries when Saul was pursuing him, or his parents' sojourn in Moab for fear of King Saul, are cases in point. Many other individuals may have had reasons for fleeing their own country and settling, whether for a time or permanently, in neighbouring countries. The area around Syria would have been a very likely refuge for the more northerly tribes, especially Naphtali, Asher, Zebulun, the Danites in the north, and Manasseh across the Jordan.¹³

⁸ English Bible passages are quoted from *The Holy Scriptures according to the Masoretic Text* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1955).

⁹ Reinhold, *Die Beziehungen Altisraels*, 86.

¹⁰ Reinhold, *Die Beziehungen Altisraels*, 84; cf. Mazar, 'Aramean Empire', 156.

¹¹ Reinhold, *Die Beziehungen Altisraels*, 95f.

¹² Cf. Mazar, 'Aramean Empire', 157.

¹³ For the practice of the handling of refugees see Reinhold, *Die Beziehungen Altisraels*, 101f.

Intermarriage with the nations all around must have also led to movement from one country to another. We know that kings intermarried with the neighbouring royal families in order to establish diplomatic alliances, and sometimes to avoid costly battles. David's marriage to Maacah (2 Sam. 3:3), daughter of Talmai, the king of Geshur, is one such example. There is no reason to doubt that this happened in many other affluent families not of royal stock. Such a practice would have led to Israelites settling outside their country.

Also, in times of famine, people moved from place to place, seeking 'greener pastures', a practice that is recorded as early as the time of Abraham and Jacob. The story of Ruth, which is dated in the Bible as in 'the days when the Judges judged',¹⁴ gives famine as the reason for Elimelech and his wife settling in Moab, and tells of how their sons took Moabite girls for wives. The language and customs were similar enough in those areas to make these movements readily acceptable, should the necessity arise.¹⁵

Relations between Israel and Aram in the Days of King Solomon (ca. 968–928 BCE)

Solomon inherited a large kingdom from his father:

And Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the River unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt; they brought presents, and served Solomon all the days of his life. (1 Kgs 5:1)

The summary description of the vast extent of Solomon's empire is buffeted by the many accounts of Israel's international relations, with Aram, Egypt, Tyre (i.e. Phoenicia), Kue (Keveh) in southern Anatolia (whence Solomon imported horses), and Ophir.¹⁶ As the borders of the

¹⁴ Ruth 1:1.

¹⁵ For an introduction to Moab see J. Maxwell Miller, 'Moab (Place)', *ABD*, ed. David Noel Freedman, Vol. 4 (New York: Doubleday, 1992) 6 vols, 882–893. For the Moabite language, see John C. L. Gibson and John F. Healey, *Textbook of Syrian Semitic Inscriptions. Vol. I: Hebrew and Moabite Inscriptions* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971) 71–74.

¹⁶ Malamat, 'A Political Look at the Kingdom of David and Solomon and Its Relations with Egypt', 190; Herbert Donner, 'The Interdependence of Internal Affairs and Foreign Policy during the Davidic-Solomonic Period (with Special

state spread, so did its commerce. It was during this period that the Phoenicians went far towards developing sea trade in the Mediterranean.¹⁷ To some extent, the Israelites took part in this development, especially in the northern tribes of Asher, Naphtali and Dan, together with their Phoenician neighbours in Tyre and Sidon.¹⁸ Having achieved supremacy in the Mediterranean, the Tyrians sought to establish sea trade along the African and Arabian coasts. In this venture, Solomon¹⁹ participated by allowing the Tyrians overland passage through Israel to the Red Sea Gulf, where a port was secured at Ezion–Geber. Clearly, the venture benefited both kingdoms, with various descriptions of fleets returning laden with silver, ivory, gold, precious stones, and *almug* wood, as well as exotic animals such as apes and baboons (1 Kgs 9:26–28; 10:11 – 12:22).²⁰

Solomon's kingdom also served as a contact between Egypt and Syria for horse-trading. For example, in 1 Kgs 10:28–29, we read (*cf.* 2 Chron. 1:16–17):

And the horses which Solomon had were brought out of Egypt; also out of Keveh, the king's merchants buying them of the men of Keveh at a price. And a chariot came up and went out of Egypt for six hundred shekels of silver, and a horse for a hundred and fifty; and so for all the kings of the Hittites, and for the kings of Aram, did they bring them out by their means.

Regard to the Phoenician Coast)', *Studies in the Period of David and Solomon and Other Essays*, ed. Tomoo Ishida (Tokyo: Yamakawa-Shuppansha, 1982) 205–214.

¹⁷ An interesting example of travel and communication throughout the ANE is seen in the story of Wen-Amon's journey to Phoenicia ca. 1,100 BCE: *ANET*³, 25–29. 'Wen-Amon, an official of the temple of Amon at Karnak, tells how he was sent to Byblos on the Phoenician coast to procure lumber for the ceremonial barge of the god' (p. 25).

¹⁸ It must be remembered that the Israelite towns of Abel and Dan were less than twenty miles away from Tyre, and already in the Song of Deborah we read of Dan's dealings in navigation (Judg. 5:17). Jacob Lewy, *ישראל בעמים [Israel among the Nations]* (Tel-Aviv: Am Oved Publication, 1956).

Already David had a friendly relationship to Tyre from where he was even sent Cedar trees and carpenters and masons for his building activities (2 Sam. 5:11f).

¹⁹ Besides shared economical interests Solomon is also reported to have loved Sidonian women and to have gone after their goddess Ashtoreth (1 Kgs 11:1, 5).

²⁰ J. Maxwell Miller and John H. Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah* (London: SCM Press, 1986) 212–213; Y. Ikeda, 'Solomon's Trade in Horses and Chariots in Its International Setting', *Studies in the Period of David and Solomon and Other Essays*, ed. Tomoo Ishida (Tokyo: Yamakawa-Shuppansha, 1982) 219–220.

Whereas Egypt was famed for the making of lavishly ornamented chariots for processional and ceremonial use, for collection and display, or for gifts and tribute, it needed to import much of the different kinds of wood required for their fashioning. Syria's abundance of lumber would have facilitated the involvement of Israel as the intermediary in this trade.²¹

Towards the end of his reign, it becomes clear that Solomon's hold over his vast territory weakened, although to what extent we do not know.²² Edom under Hadad, which had been conquered by David, may have recovered its independence. It is uncertain to what extent the accession to the Egyptian throne of the aggressive Libyan chief, Shishak, around 931 BCE, played a part in the rebellion of Hadad, whose links with Egypt are attested in 1 Kings 11:14–22. With the rise of Rezon to power in Aram-Damascus, and his hostilities towards Solomon, it is possible that both Zobah and Damascus were lost. However, it is worth mentioning that the Chronicler reports that King Solomon actually built cities in Syria:

And Solomon went to Hamath-zobah, and prevailed against it. And he built Tadmor in the wilderness, and all the store-cities, which he built in Hamath. (2 Chron. 8:3–4)

Here is another instance where Israelite citizens almost certainly travelled into Aram from Israel. Even though it may be argued that the bulk of the labour would have been taken from the conquered area, the supervisors and overseers of the building, as well as the highly skilled people in the work required, would most likely have been brought over from Jerusalem. Again, one might argue that their sojourn was a temporary one, but it is reasonable to assume that a number of people did migrate permanently.

An explicit case of this, though concerning Phoenicia, is stated when King Solomon actually brought a man of the tribe of Naphtali from Tyre to work on the temple:

And king Solomon sent and fetched Hiram out of Tyre. He was the son of a widow of the tribe of Naphtali, and his father was a man of Tyre, a worker in brass; and he was filled with wisdom and understanding and

²¹ Ikeda, 'Solomon's Trade in Horses and Chariots in Its International Setting', 224–225.

²² John Bright, *A History of Israel*, 3rd edn (London: SCM Press, 1981) 213f; cf. Pitard, *Ancient Damascus*, 96f.

skill, to work all works in brass. And he came to king Solomon, and wrought all his work. (1 Kgs 7:13–14)

Here is an example of a man of the tribe of Naphtali who lived in Tyre, whose mother was an Israelite and whose father was Tyrian, and who was called back to Jerusalem to work on the temple.²³

Israel²⁴ and Aram up to the Days of Omri

In the following era, border quarrels between Israel and Judah, once Solomon's kingdom had been divided into two parts, were used to its own advantage by Aram, to work towards regaining independence and even exercising influence on Israel.²⁵

After the initial rise to power under Rezon, Damascus continued to gain strength, and became not only the well recognised leader of the Aramean states, but also a power to be reckoned with by all the surrounding states. It is thus not surprising to read that Asa, king of Judah (908–867 BCE), called on Ben-Hadad, king of Aram, for help against Baasha, king of Israel (906–883 BCE).²⁶

And there was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel all their days. And Baasha king of Israel went up against Judah, and built Ramah, that he might not suffer any to go out or come in to Asa king of Judah. Then Asa took all the silver and the gold that were left in the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house, and delivered them into the hand of his servants; and king Asa sent them to Ben-Hadad, the son of Tabrimmon, the son of Hezion, king of Aram, that dwelt at Damascus, saying: 'There is a league between me and thee, between my father and thy

²³ For Hiram's role in the commercial and diplomatic relations between Israel and Tyre, see G. Bunnens, 'Commerce et Diplomatie Phéniciens au Temps de Hiram I^{er} de Tyr', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (1976) 1–31.

²⁴ After the division of Solomon's kingdom following his death into a southern kingdom (Judah) and a northern kingdom (Israel), the northern kingdom naturally had by far more contact with Aram than Judah because of its geographical closeness. This will be obvious in the following paragraphs, where Judah will be mentioned only in the few instances where it is involved with Aram itself.

²⁵ Reinhold, *Die Beziehungen Altisraels*, 106f; cf. p. 117.

²⁶ Merrill F. Unger, *Israel and the Aramaeans of Damascus: A Study in Archaeological Illumination of Bible History* (London: James Clarke & Co., 1957) 57ff.

father; behold, I have sent unto thee a present of silver and gold; go, break thy league with Baasha king of Israel, that he may depart from me.' And Ben-Hadad hearkened unto Asa, and sent the captains of his armies against the cities of Israel, and smote Ijon, and Dan, and Abel-beth-maacah, and all Chinneroth, with all the land of Naphtali. And it came to pass, when Baasha heard thereof, that he left off building Ramah, and dwelt in Tirzah. (1 Kgs 15:16–21)

Technically, it seems that the Syrian invasions of Israel began with this king. Mazar thinks that under Ben-Hadad, apart from being harried in the north, Israel also lost some territory across the Jordan, north of the Yarmuk.²⁷ As a result of these events, again prisoners must have been taken from the captured towns. As cities changed hands, it would seem to be almost inevitable that many families were involved, and even if they were to continue living in their own homes, the new contact with the conquering Arameans must have made for movement into their country for various reasons.

The Time of Omri (882–871 BCE)

Due to his religious sins, Omri does not perhaps receive the important place he deserves from the writers of the Old Testament. Obviously, his name travelled far. He became famous for the building of the new capital, Samaria (1 Kgs 16:23f),²⁸ and even after the House of Omri had been

²⁷ Cf. Mazar, 'Aramean Empire', 158f. Mazar thinks that 1 Chron. 2:23 deals with the time after Baasha's death. J. Maxwell Miller, 'Geshur and Aram', *JNES*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (1969) 61, however, doubts this.

²⁸ Chosen, according to D. N. Pienaar, 'The Role of Fortified Cities in the Northern Kingdom during the Reign of the Omride Dynasty', *JNSL*, Vol. 9 (1981) 151–157, for reasons of strategy and safety, also reflecting his rather positive attitude towards the Phoenicians and a reserved one towards the Arameans (cf. D. N. Pienaar, 'Aram and Israel during the Reigns of Omri and Ahab Reconsidered', *Journal for Semitics*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (1994) 34–45). Albrecht Alt, *Der Stadtstaat Samaria*, Berichte über die Verhandlungen der Sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig, Philologisch-Historische Klasse 101, 5 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1954) (= Albrecht Alt, 'Der Stadtstaat Samaria', *KS*, Vol. 3 (München: C. H. Beck, 1953) 3 vols, 258–302) considers Samaria to be a city state, created in order to deal with the Israelite–Canaanite problems. For archaeology, see Mazar, *Archaeology*, 406ff; Nahman Avigad, 'Samaria (City)', *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, eds Ephraim Stern, Ayelet Lewinson-Gilboa and Joseph Aviram, Vol. 4 (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society and Carta, 1993) 4 vols, 1300–1310.

purged, Assyrian documents²⁹ still refer to the northern kingdom as *Bīt-Humrî*, that is, House of Omri. The Moabite Stone³⁰ tells of his military successes against Mesha, king of Moab. Against Damascus, however, he did not succeed. This is not reported directly regarding Omri, but we gather this information when we read about Ahab:

And [Ben-Hadad] said unto him {Ahab}:³¹ ‘The cities which my father took from thy father I will restore; and thou shalt make streets for thee in Damascus, as my father made in Samaria.’ ‘And I [, said Ahab,] will let thee go with this covenant.’ (1 Kgs 20:34)

This record seems to indicate that Omri was forced to give the king of Damascus a number of towns, and also make provision within Samaria itself, for a number of bazaars for Aramean merchants. Whether ‘thy father’ literally refers to Omri, or to one of the previous kings, is not certain.³² M. F. Unger further argues that Ben-Hadad’s use of the expression, *Samaria*, ‘is to be understood as formulaic’—that the name was transferred to the northern kingdom of which it was the capital. ‘The commercial privileges to which the Syrian king made reference may well have been established in Tirzah, Shechem, or some other Israelite towns’.³³ If this were so, and there are reasons for believing that it may well have been, since these other towns had long held places of prominence in the land, one can assume that there was even greater contact between the Israelites and the Arameans, and more inter-communication than is generally realised.

²⁹ *ANET*³, 284f.

³⁰ Stela, discovered at Dhiban (ancient Moabite site, east of the Dead Sea) in 1868, containing a 35-line inscription of Mesha, king of Moab. For text and further details see *ANET*³ 320f, plate 274; J. A. Dearman and G. L. Mattingly, ‘Mesha Stele’, *ABD*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992) 6 vols, 708f.

³¹ The square brackets are found in the bible edition used. The word in {} is inserted by the author.

³² Unger, *Israel and the Aramaeans*, 61. Unger thinks that these towns may have been wrested from Israel during the reign of Jeroboam I (928–907 BCE) or Nadab (907–906 BCE). Bright, *A History of Israel*, 240f, agrees with this theory, though thinking ‘that the Arameans had taken advantage of Israel’s weakness during Baasha’s reign or during the civil war following it’, and supports it with the argument that the fact of Omri’s being free to campaign in the south implies quiet on the northern borders (pp. 242f). However, for a completely different chronology see n. 34 below.

³³ Unger, *Israel and the Aramaeans*, 61.

The Omride Dynasty after the Time of Omri

That there was both commercial and political contact between Ahab, Omri's son (873–852 BCE), and Ben-Hadad is clear from 1 Kings 20:³⁴

And Ben-Hadad the king of Aram gathered all his host together; and there were thirty and two kings with him, and horses and chariots; and he went up and besieged Samaria, and fought against it. And he sent messengers to Ahab king of Israel, into the city, and said unto him: 'Thus saith Ben-Hadad: Thy silver and thy gold is mine; thy wives also and thy children, even the goodliest, are mine.' And the king of Israel answered and said: 'It is according to thy saying, my lord, O King: I am thine, and all that I have.' And the messengers came again, and said: 'Thus speaketh Ben-Hadad, saying: I sent indeed unto thee, saying: Thou shalt deliver me thy silver, and thy gold, and thy wives, and thy children; but I will send my servants unto thee tomorrow about this time, and they shall search thy house, and the houses of thy servants; and it shall be, that whatsoever is pleasant in thine eyes, they shall put in their hand, and take it away.'

Then the king of Israel called all the elders of the land, and said: 'Mark, I pray you, and see how this man seeketh mischief; for he sent unto me for my wives, and for my children, and for my silver, and for my gold; and I denied him not.' And all the elders and all the people said unto him: 'Hearken thou not, neither consent.'

...And they went out at noon. But Ben-Hadad was drinking himself drunk in the booths, he and the kings, the thirty and two kings that helped him. And the young men of the princes of the provinces went out first; and Ben-Hadad sent out, and they told him, saying: 'There are men come out from Samaria.' And he said: 'Whether they are come out for peace, take them alive; or whether they are come out for war, take them alive.' So these went out of the city, the young men of the princes of the provinces, and the army which followed them. And they slew everyone his man; and the Arameans fled, and Israel pursued them; and Ben-Hadad the king of Aram escaped on a horse with horsemen. And the king of Israel went out, and smote the horses and chariots, and slew the Arameans with a great slaughter. And the prophet came near to the king of Israel, and said unto

³⁴ The question of whether these events are to be placed in the time of Ahab or later under Joahaz (817-800 BCE) or Joash (800-784 BCE) does not contribute much to the issues we are concerned with here. For the discussion and bibliography of it see Reinhold, *Die Beziehungen Altisraels*, 123ff. The same is true of the questions of chronology and names of the Aramean kings of the 9th century. For a detailed list of attempts undertaken towards a solution see Reinhold, *Die Beziehungen Altisraels*, 113ff and 139ff.

him: 'Go, strengthen thyself, and mark, and see what thou doest; for at the return of the year the king of Aram will come up against thee'.

The prophet's words came true, and the two kings engaged in battle again a year later at Aphek, where the Israelites again won a victory over the Arameans. It was then that:

[Ben-Hadad] said unto him [to Ahab]: 'The cities which my father took from thy father I will restore...' (1 Kgs 20:34)³⁵

According to this record, it is evident that at the end of this battle which spelt victory for Israel, Ahab and Ben-Hadad became allies, probably due to the expediency of such a move in the face of the rising threat of the Assyrian power.³⁶ Israel and Aram were partners in a coalition of twelve nations that took part in the battle of Qarqar on the Orontes in 853 BCE, in an attempt to check the advance of the common threat of Assyria under Shalmaneser III (858–824).³⁷

Two significant features of this report may be noted. Firstly, there is a mention of captives. Among other items which Ben-Hadad demanded were wives and children of the king. This was a regular practice in the ancient world. When conquerors demanded gifts or ransom, people were included. Secondly, Ahab is here reported as having 'streets in Damascus' such as the Arameans had in Samaria, in other words, reciprocal trading-posts.³⁸ This would undoubtedly have involved the movement of merchants to and fro, but the possibility of a more permanent settlement outside their own country, for some, should also be proposed.

³⁵ See p. 13 above.

³⁶ The reason for these wars with Israel might in fact have been the Assyrian threat. Perhaps Ben-Hadad wanted to secure his rear as preparation to face Shalmaneser (see Mazar, *'Aramean Empire'*, 159). According to Mazar, Ben-Hadad, also at that time, united the formerly more loosely connected Aramean states more closely (see vv. 24f) and thus turned Aram into a mighty empire (p. 160). For a different position see Pitard, *Ancient Damascus*, 152ff.

The major cities of Israel were fortified during the 8th century BCE, probably due to the Assyrian threat. See Mazar, *Archaeology*, 411.

³⁷ Bright, *A History of Israel*, 243; text from Assyrian Annals which tells of this event in *ANET*³, 278f.

³⁸ For Phoenician ivories found in Samaria, possibly dating from Ahab's time see Mazar, *Archaeology*, 505.

The religious influences flowing from Aram and Phoenicia must also have made for contacts between Israel and the peoples of these areas. Ahab himself married Jezebel, the daughter of the Phoenician king, Ethbaal I, and consequently built a temple and altar for Baal in Samaria. Thus, he introduced Baal worship there (1 Kgs 16:31f), as probably did his daughter, Athaliah (842–836 BCE)³⁹, who was married to the Judean king, Jehoram (851–843 BCE), in Judah (*cf.* 2 Kgs 11:18). However, it was not merely that kings married Phoenician princesses and started to worship their gods, but various classes of the people, and especially the upper strata of Israelite society, must have visited centres of pagan worship.⁴⁰

Zechariah later actually refers to the mourning for Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddo (Zech. 12:11). This was probably a religious ceremony derived from the cult practiced in the temple of Hadadrimmon in Damascus. It would be reasonable to assume that when the priest, Uriah, was ordered to build an altar in the temple of Jerusalem, by Ahaz, king of Judah (743–727 BCE) (2 Kgs 16:10–16), he copied the pattern of the altar in the temple of Hadadrimmon. The story about Ahaz also emphasises the ‘high esteem in which the Damascene cult was held in Jerusalem’.⁴¹

He sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus, which smote him; and he said: ‘Because the gods of the kings of Aram helped them, therefore will I sacrifice to them, that they may help me.’ (2 Chron. 28:23)

Aramaic, which later became the *lingua franca* in the Persian Empire, from India to Ethiopia, had already, in the 8th century, spread well beyond the boundaries of Aramaic speaking countries.⁴² This fact would have made contacts with Aram very easy, and would have enabled influences from there to easily penetrate cultural, political and religious life in Israel.

³⁹ After the death of her son, Athalia took the Judean throne for herself.

⁴⁰ Israelites worshipping Aramean and Phoenician gods are reported as early as the time of the judges (Judg. 10:6): ‘And the children of Israel again did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baalim and the Ashtaroth, and the gods of Aram, and the gods of Zidon, and the gods of Moab...’

⁴¹ Mazar, ‘*Aramean Empire*’, 162; Emil Gottlieb Heinrich Kraeling, *Aram and Israel* (New York: AMS Press, 1966 [1918]) 121, thought, however, that it was an Assyrian altar and that Ahaz by this ‘act of servility...hoped to please his lord Tiglath-Pileser’.

⁴² For an excellent overview over the development of the Aramaic language see Klaus Beyer, *The Aramaic Language: Its Distribution and Subdivisions* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986).

Jehu's Dynasty

For a long time (from the time of David to the end of the Omride dynasty), Palestine had been under the political and cultural influence of the Phoenicians. B. Mazar states that traces of this influence, 'viewed against the alliance between the courts of Israel and Tyre, are clearly discernible in Israel's economic, religious, and cultic life, as well as in architecture, court practise, and upper class manners, and are strongly reflected in biblical literature and in material remains discovered throughout the country.'⁴³

However, the rising influence of the Aramean Empire under Hazael, together with the bloody purge of Jehu (842–814 BCE) (2 Kgs 9f), witnessed the cessation of the Israel–Tyre alliance, and the waning of Phoenician influence upon Israel and Judah. This purge, which extended to both royal houses, is mentioned in a fragment of a commemorative stela, probably issued by Hazael of Aram, which was recently uncovered at Tel-Dan.⁴⁴ It narrates the slaughter of Jehoram of Israel (851–842 BCE) and Ahaziah of Judah (843–842 BCE), attributing their deaths to the Syrian ruler himself. The biblical account describes their deaths at the hand of Jehu, the Israelite usurper. It is possible that Jehu was perceived by Hazael as his agent, just as he was perceived as Yahweh's instrument by the compiler of the biblical narrative.

Due to the rising Aramean influence, great changes occurred in the Israelite culture during the second half of the 9th century, especially towards its end, as archaeological evidence on the one hand and biblical literature on the other hand show. The decline of Phoenician influence meant that the country came under the influence of the 'eclectic culture of the Aramean Empire, which blended ancient Syrian with Phoenician and

⁴³ Mazar, 'Aramean Empire', 165. For architecture see Mazar, *Archaeology*, 408, 541; for other archaeological finds like ivories and seals confirming Phoenician and Aramean influence, see pp. 503–507, 518, *cf.* pp. 403f; for political influence see Reinhold, *Die Beziehungen Altisraels*, 159.

⁴⁴ Avraham Biran and Joseph Naveh, 'The Tel Dan Inscription: A New Fragment', *IEJ*, Vol. 45, No. 1 (1995) 17–18. The stela does not carry Hazael's name, but he is the most likely candidate for it.