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HADADEZER OR BEN-HADAD

Ben-hadad of Damascus warred with Ahab of Israel and shortly afterwards Hadadezer of Damascus had the aid of Ahab against the Assyrian invaders. Historians commonly regard Ben-hadad and Hadadezer as in all probability one and the same person,¹ and they look upon the two names as mere variations of one original form.

The identity of person, however, has not been placed beyond the possibility of doubt; and the counter theory of diversity of person is entertained, the view that Ben-hadad was the predecessor of Hadadezer on the throne of Damascus. This counter theory introduces no confusion into the story. The Hebrew, Assyrian and other historical data arrange themselves naturally and render a consistent account of the course of events in northern Israel and at Damascus during an entire century.

The story is this: About the year 896 B. C. Baasha of Israel and a king of Damascus named Ben-hadad entered into an alliance (1 Kin. xv. 19^b), and Baasha advanced against Judah (verse 17). Thereupon Asa, king of Judah, reminded Ben-hadad of an ancient league already existing between him and Ben-hadad, and between his father and Ben-hadad's father, and by a gift of treasure he persuaded Ben-hadad to break his alliance with Baasha (verse 19). Ben-hadad accordingly seized a number of fortified towns in northern Israel along the caravan route between Damascus and the port of Akko on the Mediterranean sea (verse 20).

In the year 886 Omri as general had command of the army of Baasha's son and successor (1 Kin. xvi. 8, 16), and in

¹ "Benhadad II ist vermuthlich, wenn nicht sicher, identisch mit dem keilinschriftlichen auf der Monolithinschrift Salmanassar's II . . . erwähnten Dad-'id-ri," i.e. Hadadezer (Schrader, KAT², 1883, p. 200).

the following year was proclaimed king by the army. Civil war ensued, lasting several years and ending in the establishment of Omri on the throne. About the year 880 he founded and fortified the city of Samaria, and made it the capital of northern Israel. About the same time the marriage of his son Ahab with Jezebel, daughter of the king of the Sidonians was arranged (1 Kin. xvi. 31), an international alliance that tended to strengthen Israel against Damascus.

In 874 B. C. Ahab succeeded his father as king of Israel. Fourteen years later, in 860 B. C., Shalmaneser ascended the throne of Assyria, and began a reign destined to last for thirty-five years; but though his army crossed the Euphrates on several campaigns, his expeditions were not at first directed against the people who dwelt as far south as Damascus and Samaria. In 856, or possibly 857 B. C., a king of Damascus named Ben-hadad, aided by thirty-two petty kings, besieged Ahab in the fortress of Samaria (1 Kin. xx. 1, 2), but his army was routed and he fled on horseback (verses 20, 21). He returned with an army at the beginning of the next year, but was utterly defeated by Ahab at the town of Aphek. Ben-hadad sued for peace, and offered to restore to Ahab the cities which his father had taken from Ahab's father,² and to allow the Israelites to occupy streets in Damascus for commercial purposes (1 Kin. xx. 26-34). Three years of peace ensued between Israel and Damascus (1 Kin. xxii. 1; comp. "third year," verse 2). In this interval of quiet Ahab obtained the vineyard of Naboth by a judicial murder (1 Kin. xxi. 1, 17-19).

At Damascus Hadadezer, according to the theory, succeeded Ben-hadad on the throne; and in 854 B. C., the battle of Karkar was fought: Hadadezer at the head of a league of kings, which included Ahab of Israel, opposed Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, near the river Orontes. The Assyrians withdrew, and did not reappear in that region for

² The actual father, or a remoter ancestor, or merely a predecessor on the throne. Compare footnote 6.

five years. Taking advantage of the absence of the Assyrians, Hadadezer in 853 B. C. renewed the war with Israel and seized the town of Ramoth in Gilead (1 Kin. xxii. 1-3). Ahab with the aid of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, attempted to recover Ramoth, but failed; and he died in the evening of wounds received in the battle (verses 29-36). From this time onward for several years as opportunity offered Hadadezer harassed Israel by predatory incursions, conducted by means of marauding bands (2 Kin. v. 2, vi. 23). Moab, too, revolted from Israel and withheld the customary tribute (2 Kin. iii. 4, 5). In 849 B. C. Shalmaneser led an army into the west and again warred with Hadadezer. Three years later, in 846 B. C., Shalmaneser was once more at war with Hadadezer. After this campaign the Assyrian army did not come again into the west until the year 842.

Toward the close of 846 B. C. or several months later, Ben-hadad succeeded Hadadezer on the throne of Damascus; and soon afterwards, there being no Assyrians in the west to keep him at home for the defense of his country, he led an army into the territory of Israel, besieged Samaria, and brought the city into dire distress; but his army suddenly became panic stricken and fled in wild confusion (2 Kin. vi. 24ff.). The king of Israel, who at this time was Jehoram, son of Ahab, is referred to by Elisha as "son of a murderer" (verse 32, comp. ix. 24-26).

About 843 B. C. Ben-hadad was murdered by Hazael and the throne of Damascus was seized by the assassin (2 Kin. viii. 7-15). In 842 B. C. military forces of Jehoram were contending with the troops of Hazael at Ramoth in Gilead for the possession of that stronghold (2 Kin. viii. 28f., ix. 14). Jehu, the commander of the Israelite army, left Ramoth at the prompting of a prophet, slew Jehoram at Jezreel, and seized the throne (2 Kin. ix. 4ff.). But Shalmaneser now invaded the west. Hazael advanced against him, but was defeated and fled to Damascus. Jehu paid tribute to Shalmaneser rather than fight. In 839 B. C. Shalmaneser again entered the territory ruled by Hazael, and captured

four cities (Obelisk 102f.). He reigned fourteen years longer, but did not again appear in the neighborhood of Damascus. Hazael was now free to continue his aggression against Israel, and he ravaged the whole of the Israelite territory east of the Jordan (2 Kin. x. 32). 821 B. C. Jehu associated his son Jehoahaz in the government (Antiq. ix. 8, 5 and 2 Kin. xiii. 10, correcting verse 1). After seven years as co-regent, the son succeeded his father on the throne (2 Kin. x. 35). Hazael continued to oppress Israel, and held the country in vassalage all the days of Jehoahaz (2 Kin. xiii. 3, 7, 22). He also marched against the cities of Gath and Jerusalem in the closing years of the reign of Jehoash, king of Judah (2 Kin. xii. 17; 2 Chron. xxiv. 23-25), a reign which ended in 805 B. C.

In 805 B. C. Jehoash of Israel succeeded Jehoahaz on the throne of Israel. About this time also Ben-hadad succeeded his father Hazael as king of Damascus (2 Kin. xiii. 24), and continued the oppression of Israel (verse 3).³ In 803, or 797, B. C. Adad-nirari, king of Assyria, besieged Mari, i. e. Ben-hadad, king of Damascus,⁴ forced the surrender of the city, took immense booty, and imposed the payment of tri-

³ Bar-hadad, son of Hazael, king of Aram, is mentioned in a contemporaneous inscription by Zakir, king of Hamath (Pognon, *Inscriptions sémitiques de la Syrie*, No. 86).

⁴ In the speech of Damascus the word signified "my lord." Tiele explained it as "einer jener verkürzten Eigennamen, in welchen der Götternamen ausgefallen ist" (*Babylonisch-Assyrische Geschichte*, 1886, p. 211). It is, however, commonly understood to be the first part of the royal title, "my lord the king"; or itself, without any additional term, the popular designation of the kings of Damascus, "my lord." The words of the Assyrian inscription are: *Ma-ri-šar ša mat Imeri-šu ina al Di-ma-aš-ki al šarru-ti-šu lu-u e-sir-šu*, My lord, the king of Damascus, in Damascus his royal city I besieged (I R 35, lines 16 and 17). The use of "my lord" as a title of the king was common in Israel, being illustrated especially by those instances where the possessive pronoun would otherwise be expected in the plural number: thus, "they said to the king, Jehovah hath avenged my lord the king" (2 Sam. iv. 8), and similarly 2 Sam. xv. 15, 1 Kin. i. 2, Ezra x. 3 R.V. The title was also used to designate God: thus, "Ye shall know that I am my Lord Jehovah" (Ezek. xiii. 9, xxiv. 24): and simply "my lord" (1 Kin. iii. 10, xxii. 6, Dan. i. 2).

bute upon Damascus and also upon the peoples of northern Israel, Edom, and Philistia. In three battles or campaigns Jehoash recovered from Ben-hadad the towns which Hazael had wrested from Israel (2 Kin. xiii. 25). Jehoash died about 790 B. C.

This narrative is the same as that yielded by the common theory that Ben-hadad and Hadadezer are one person,⁵ and that the two names are but variations of the same original; except that now, on the theory that they are different persons, Hadadezer appears as the successor of that Ben-hadad who was utterly defeated by Ahab at the town of Aphek, and as the predecessor of the Ben-hadad whom Hazael murdered. Hadadezer is the king of Syria of whom the Hebrew writer speaks, without mentioning the king's personal name, in the narrative extending from 1 Kin. xxii. 3 to 2 Kin. vi. 23. The succession of kings on the throne of Damascus for a century and more, beginning about the year 900 B. C. or a little earlier, then is Hezion; Tabrimmon;⁶ Ben-hadad, contemporary of Asa; perhaps followed by a king whose name is still unknown; Ben-hadad, contemporary of Ahab; Hadadezer; Ben-hadad, contemporary of Jehoram; Hazael, and after him his son Ben-hadad, a contemporary of Jehoash of Israel.

On this counter theory that Ben-hadad of Ahab's time is a different person from Hadadezer, the accuracy of the Hebrew record in certain statements has recently been called in question. Quite unnecessarily, however. The inquiry concerns the quinquennium from 846 to 842 B. C. inclusive. According to the Hebrew record, when combined with the Assyrian reports, a king of Damascus, Ben-hadad by name, occupied the throne between Hadadezer (or in the Assyrian form of his name Adad-idri) and Hazael. Dr. Luckenbill

⁵ For the same arrangement on this theory, see *Presbyterian and Reformed Review*, 1891, pp. 103-105.

⁶ It seems to follow from 1 Kin. xv. 19 that Tabrimmon reigned at Damascus. Possibly, however, "father" is there used in a wider sense (see footnote 2). If so, 1 Kin. xi. 23-25 may be thought of in connection with xv. 19.

strangely says that "it is obviously impossible to put" this Ben-hadad between Hadadezer and Hazael: obviously impossible because according to the annals of Shalmaneser Hadadezer was king of Damascus in the year 846 B. C., whereas Hazael was king in the year 842; and the Hebrew writer states that Hazael murdered his master Ben-hadad, the king of Aram, at Damascus and reigned in his stead (2 Kin. viii. 7-15).⁷ Instead of being "obviously impossible," however, it is clearly possible. For the space of four years or five is ample time for the death of Hadadezer, the accession and reign of Ben-hadad, his assassination, and the accession of Hazael. Historical parallels are numerous. The annals of the neighboring kingdom of northern Israel alone, during its brief existence of little more than two centuries, furnish several instances. One example suffices. Hadadezer's contemporary Ahab died of wounds received in battle, was succeeded by his son Ahaziah who, however, died in less than two years from injuries sustained in a fall and was followed on the throne by his brother Jehoram. A succession of three kings in the space of four years is quite within historical possibility.

The serious obstacle, if obstacle it be, in the way of the biblical statement that Ben-hadad of Damascus was murdered and succeeded on the throne by Hazael—that is, if Ben-hadad and Hadadezer are not one and the same person—is found in an inscription of Shalmaneser's, unearthed from the ruins of the ancient city of Asshur. As quoted by Dr. Kraeling,⁸ it states that "Adad-idri forsook the land (i.e. died); Hazael, son of a nobody, seized the throne." And Dr. Kraeling remarks: "More detailed information is presented in 2 Kings 8:3-15, if we delete the name Benhadad as a gloss and refer 'king of Aram' to Adad-idri." But before proceeding summarily to delete the name Ben-hadad as a gloss, and historically inaccurate, one should inquire

⁷ Luckenbill, *American Journal of Semitic Languages*, 1911, vol. xxvii. 281.

⁸ *Aram and Israel*, being *Columbia University Oriental Studies*, vol. xiii, p. 79.

whether the inscription has been correctly translated and interpreted.

The first peculiarity is noticeable in the translation, and consists in the strange omission of a small but important word of the original text. If the inscription stated that "Adad-idri forsook the land," the Assyrian scribe certainly adopted a highly poetic form of words in order to record the prosaic fact that the king died. The original text, however, does not say "the land," but "his land"; and the rendering "Hadadezer forsook his land" suggests not death, but flight; and Dr. Langdon renders the phrase "abandoned his land," and explains the words as meaning that Hadadezer abdicated the throne. However, the meaning really is that which Dr. Kraeling reached through an incorrect translation. The words should be rendered "Hadadezer reached his mountain," and this expression, not so curiously perhaps as might be imagined, signifies that Hadadezer died.⁹ And it is quite conceivable that on the death of Hadadezer he was succeeded in due course by the legitimate heir to the throne, the Ben-hadad of whom the Hebrew writer speaks. In the first of the two lines and a half quoted from the Assyrian inscription there is, accordingly, no necessary contradiction of the Hebrew record. Only when this line is taken in connection with the following line and a half does the possibility of contradiction arise. The two statements read:

Hadadezer reached his mountain.

Hazael, son of nobody,
seized the throne.

The Assyrian scribe differs with the Hebrew writer if by these words he means to assert that Hazael was the immediate successor of Hadadezer, and had seized the throne by violence before the legitimate heir was seated. Does he mean this? To interpret his meaning the two lines and a half must not be torn from their context and scanned apart by themselves as though they formed an entity. They must

⁹ See footnote 7 to the note entitled "The Statue of Shalmaneser at Asshur" in this number of the REVIEW.

be considered in the light of their setting, and viewed from the standpoint of the larger history of Assyria and Israel.

By their setting the two lines are separated. The first of the two is the conclusion of a paragraph relating to Shalmaneser's war with Hadadezer, a conflict carried on at intervals during nine years, and the second line introduces a paragraph regarding the war of Shalmaneser with Damascus in the days of Hazael. The narrative portion of the inscription is not continuous history, but is topical; and, in the extant part at least, consists mainly of consecutive paragraphs devoted to the three boldest and most obstinate opponents of Shalmaneser in the west. In the first of these paragraphs is told the story of the crushing of Ahuni, a son of Adinu, whose kingdom lay on the Euphrates river. The work required years for its accomplishment. Only the triumphant outcome is recorded here and dwelt upon. In the second paragraph is narrated the signal defeat of Hadadezer and his allies on the river Orontes. The third paragraph tells of the courageous resistance offered by a successor of Hadadezer on the throne of Damascus and of the flight of this new antagonist, the usurper Hazael, from the field of battle to the protecting walls of the capital. The rest of the story is lost by reason of the breakage of the statue on which it was written. Such is the setting of the two lines and a half: they belong to different paragraphs. The sequence of the two statements is, indeed, evidence of a temporal relation between them. The event mentioned in the later line and a half occurred after the event recorded in the preceding line. The juxtaposition of the two statements does not of itself indicate any other logical connection between the events.

Moreover, the incidents here recorded by the Assyrian scribe are but a small part of the larger history of Damascus. That history Shalmaneser is not reciting. He is celebrating his own victorious career in war, and consequently he mentions those kings only of Damascus with whom he fought: Hadadezer and the usurper Hazael, a man not of royal

blood. Shalmaneser had nothing to do with any other ruler of Damascus. In the year 846 B. C. he left Hadadezer, his opponent in many campaigns, defeated, but on the throne. On returning to the west in the year 842, he found that Hazael, a man of ignoble birth, had seized the throne and marshalled an army to resist him. Of other dynastic events during his absence of four years he has no occasion to speak, and perhaps he was not informed. At any rate he neither asserts with the Hebrew historian, nor by his form of words does he deny, that Ben-hadad was reigning at Damascus for a while during the interval between the years 846 and 842 B. C., but before the close of the period was smothered with a wet towel by Hazael and the throne seized by the murderer.¹⁰

A siege of Samaria by Ben-hadad is recorded in 2 Kin. vi.24-vii, during which the inhabitants of the city were brought to the verge of starvation and were only saved by the panic and flight of the Syrian army. This siege oc-

¹⁰ From the annals of Tiglath-pileser it would not be known that Pekahiah occupied the throne of northern Israel for a time. The Assyrian king mentions his reception of tribute from Menahem, his instigation of the murder of Pekah, and his establishment of Hoshea on the throne. He does not mention Pekahiah, son of Menahem, who reigned for two years after his father's death and was assassinated by Pekah, who thereupon usurped the kingly office; for Tiglath-pileser did not come into contact with Pekahiah, and the Assyrian is not writing the domestic history of the court of Israel.

Ptolemy did not set out to prepare a complete roster of the kings who reigned in Babylon after Nabonassar. He was drawing up a catalogue for use as a chronological calendar, and he had no need to list, and accordingly he did not list, the kings who for a brief period reigned between Nadinu and Ukin-zir, between Nergal-shar-utsur and Nabu-na'id, and between Cambyses and Darius.

Alexander Polyhistor, in naming the kings of the dynasty to which Nebuchadnezzar belonged, having mentioned Evil-merodach continues in this wise: "After him Neglisarus reigned over the Chaldaeans four years; and then Nabodenus reigned seventeen years" (Eusebius, *Chronicorum* liber 1, cap. v. 3). Yet between these two kings intervened the brief reign of Neglisar's son, a child, who ascended the throne but was murdered a few months after his accession, and was succeeded by Nabodenus, a leader of the revolt (Berosus, cited by Josephus, *contra Apionem*, i. 20).

curred during the active prophetic life of Elisha (verse 32), who succeeded Elijah in the prophetic office after the death of Ahab. The story of the siege is given a place in the Hebrew narrative immediately after the account of the attempt made by a king of Syria, who is unnamed and therefore according to the hypothesis Hadadezer, to capture Elisha at Dothan; and it is placed before the account of the interview between Hazael and Elisha at Damascus and the murder of Ben-hadad, king of Damascus, soon afterwards by Hazael. These tokens afford contributory evidence for the conclusion that Ben-hadad was on the throne of Damascus in the interval between the years 846 and 842 B. C. They also indicate that Ben-hadad was a contemporary of Jehoram, king of Israel. Notwithstanding these credentials the Hebrew record is sometimes set aside, and Ben-hadad who conducted the siege is identified with Ben-hadad, who was the son and successor of Hazael, and oppressed Israel during the reign of Jehoahaz. According to this theory not only is 2 Kin. vi. 24-vii historically inaccurate in being assigned to the time of Jehoram, but "2 Kin. xiii. 22 must be regarded as inexact."¹¹ On what ground is the evidence of the Hebrew record rejected? Mainly on this ground, namely that Elisha refers to the king of Israel as the "son of a murderer" (2 Kin. vi. 32).¹² "That Joahaz alone can be meant becomes a certainty from vi. 32, where the king is called 'son of a murderer,' which must refer to Jehu, the father of Joahaz, whose bloody deeds are chronicled in detail."¹¹ The argument is not sound. Jehu, indeed, was a man of blood and slaughtered; but it is another, and not Jehu, to whom the Hebrew writer actually applies the word murderer. Jehoram, son of Ahab, was "son of a murderer," for Ahab was ultimately responsible for the judicial murder of Naboth, and Elijah definitely charged him with the murder, and did so probably in the presence of Elisha (1 Kin. xxi.

¹¹ Kraeling, *Aram and Israel*, p. 82 and footnote.

¹² Kuenen, *Einleitung*, § 25, Anm. 12, German translation of the second edition; Kittel, *Geschichte der Hebräer*, ii. 250, Anm. 2.

19, where the word rendered kill is a form of the word rendered murderer in 2 Kin. vi. 32).¹³ Thus even in minute particulars the siege of Samaria by Ben-hadad fits into the period before Hazael's usurpation of the Syrian throne in the year 842 B. C. The failure of Ben-hadad in his campaign against Israel may not unlikely have angered the warlike Hazael, and justified him in his own eyes in removing an incompetent from the throne.

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¹³ Compare Burney, *Notes on the Hebrew Text of the Books of Kings*, p. 278.