

SYRIA

CULTURAL INSIGHT

In the King James Version of the Old Testament, Syria refers to Aram, a series of kingdoms and city-states to the immediate north of the Holy Land. The name Syria comes through ancient Greek and derives from an ancient confusion with Assyria, modern-day Iraq. Because of Syria's proximity to the Holy Land, there are a number of important Arameans (Syrians) in the Old Testament. Abraham's steward and heir before the birth of Ishmael and Isaac was from the Aramean city of Damascus (Genesis 15:2). Laban, Rebekah's brother and the father of Rachel and Leah, is described as Laban the Aramean (Genesis 25:20). David fought with the Arameans when he was establishing his kingdom (2 Samuel 8:5–6; 10). Intriguingly, Elijah anointed Hazael to be king of Aram (1 Kings 19:15). Naaman, who was healed from leprosy by Elisha, was an officer in the Aramean army (2 Kings 5:1). In fact, Aram is especially prominent in the stories around the time of Elisha's ministry. In the days of Isaiah, the Aramaean king Rezin entered into a conspiracy with Pekah, the king of Israel, to overthrow Ahaz, king of Judah (2 Kings 15:36–38). This conspiracy is the immediate context for Isaiah's Immanuel prophecy (Isaiah 7:1–8). The language Aramaic, to which Hebrew is closely related, originated in Aram.

Related verses

Genesis 15:2

Genesis 25:20

Genesis 26:20–24

2 Samuel 8:5–6

2 Samuel 10

1 Kings 19:15

1 Kings 20:1–29
2 Kings 5:1–20
2 Kings 6:8–11
2 Kings 7:1–16
2 Kings 8:7–15
2 Kings 9:14–15
2 Kings 12:17–18
2 Kings 13:17–19
2 Kings 15:37
2 Kings 16:5
Isaiah 7:1–8

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