

Ben-hadad III, King of Aram, and Jehoash, King of Israel

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King Jehoash of Israel and King Ben-Hadad III of Aram (Syria) were contemporaries and mentioned together in the Bible. Their appearance together in another ancient inscription demonstrates the historical accuracy of the Biblical references.

In the second half of the ninth century BC Israel was subject to Hazael, king of Aram (2 Kgs 13:3, 22; Wood 2000). Aram was the kingdom north of Israel, centered around Damascus in southern Syria. During the reign of Hazael's son Ben-Hadad III, however, Israel was able to throw off the yoke of oppression. The name of Ben-Hadad III appears three times in the Bible in verses 13, 24 and 25 of 2 Kings chapter 13. He ruled at the time of Amaziah, king of Judah (796 to 767 BC), and Jehoash, king of Israel (798 to 782 BC). 2 Kings 13:3 relates that Israel was subject to Aram during the days of Hazael and Ben-Hadad. 2 Kings 13:24 records the death of Hazael and the taking of the throne by Ben-Hadad around 800 BC. 2 Kings 13:25 tells of Jehoash's victories over Ben-Hadad in the early eighth century BC.

Ben-Hadad III

Ben-Hadad III ruled for an unknown number of years in the early eighth century BC. His name means "son of (the god) Hadad." We know of this king from three sources—The Zakkur Stela, an inscription from the reign of the Assyrian king Adad-nirari III, and the Bible. The order of the events described in these sources is not known for certain, but scholars suggest they occurred in the order we have listed them (Pitard 1994: 221–22).

The Zakkur Stela

The Zakkur Stela was a memorial inscription set up by Zakkur, king of Hamath and Luash, adjacent city-states north of Aram in central Syria. It was discovered in 1904 in Afis, 25 mi southwest of Aleppo, Syria. Afis was undoubtedly the site of a shrine to Ilu-Wer, the Akkadian weather god, to whom the stela was dedicated. The inscription describes an attack on Hadrach, probably the capital of Luash, by a coalition of kings led by Ben-Hadad. Zakkur was able to turn back the attack with the help of his god Ba'al-shemain (Rosenthal 1969:655–56). This record demonstrates the decline of Ben-Hadad's power on his northern frontier.

In addition to the mention of the Biblical figure Ben-Hadad III,

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