

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



**PATREON**

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

**PayPal**

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *The Expositor* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_expositor-series-1.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php)

## AN ARAMAIC INSCRIPTION FROM SYRIA.

M. POGNON, French Consul at Aleppo, has just published the second part of his *Inscriptions Sémitiques de la Syrie, de la Mésopotamie, et de la région de Mossoul* (80 francs), of which the first part appeared last year. Most of the inscriptions are Syriac of the first century A.D. and later : but the volume which appeared last year contained an interesting cuneiform inscription of Nabonidus, found at Eski-Harran, a village a few miles north-east of the ancient Haran ; and the present volume contains (pp. 156 ff.) an Aramaic inscription (No. 86), which mentions Hazael and the second Ben-hadad of the Old Testament (2 Kings xiii. 3, 25), found at a village which, for prudential reasons, M. Pognon does not name. It is of this Aramaic inscription that I propose to give a short account in the present article. It is inscribed on the front and left side of a monolith, now broken into four blocks, about 2 ft. broad and 1 ft. deep at the base, and, in its present condition, about 3 ft. 6 in. high. The *stelè* must, however, originally have been 6 or 7 ft. high ; for its upper part is at present missing, and the inscription begins below a figure, carved in bas-relief upon the stone, of which only the lower part of the robe and the feet still remain. The inscription on the front of the *stelè* consists of seventeen lines of about thirty-two letters each ; the one on the left side consists of twenty-eight lines of about fourteen letters each ; when the *stelè* was complete there were probably some thirty additional lines on the upper part of this side ; there is also an independent short inscription on the right side of the *stelè*. The words are separated from each other by thin vertical lines, which,

however, have in some cases been omitted, or once, in I. 9 after the  $\eta$  in  $\text{מחנתהם}$ , misplaced by the engraver.

The following is the Aramaic text of the inscription, as read by M. Pognon, transcribed into square Hebrew characters; in several places, it will be seen, there are passages which are illegible. The general sense is, however, clear. Zakir, the king of Hamath and La'ash, erects the *stelè* with the inscription in order to declare how his god, Baal-shamain, the Baal of heaven, had helped him against his foes. Bar-hadad (Heb. Ben-hadad), son of Hazael, king of Aram (Syria), had gathered round him a number of allies, and laid siege to Hazrak, a fortified city, it may be inferred, in Zakir's domain. He had appealed to Baal-shamain for help; and his god had answered him, and encouraged him with promises of assistance and deliverance. The imperfect lines at the beginning of col. ii. seem to have told of his successes against the besiegers of Hazrak, and of the temples and other buildings which he had erected in his land after the repulse of his foes. The inscription ends, as ancient inscriptions often do, with an imprecation against any one who injures it or removes it from its place.

## I.

$\text{[ג]צבא זי שם זכר מלך [ח]מת ולעש לאלור [?] יומא [ה] [ז]נה זכר מלך$   
 $\text{חמת ולעש אש ענה אנה ו . . . . [ג] [ג]ני בעלשמין וקם עמי והמלכני$   
 $\text{בעלשמין [ז] . . . . 4 . . . . זהך ואוחד עלי ברהדר בר חזאל$   
 $\text{מלך ארם ש . . . 5 . . . עשר מלכין ברהדר ומחנתה וברגש ומחנתה$   
 $\text{ו[מ]לך [קוה ומחנתה ומלך עמק ומחנתה ומלך גרגס] 7 [ומח]נתה$   
 $\text{ומלך שמאל ומ[חנת]ה ומלך מלו[?] 8 [ומ]חנתה . . . . 8 . . . .$   
 $\text{ש[?] בעת מלכין [המ]ו ומחנתהם ושמו כל$   
 $\text{מלכיא אל מצר על [חזר]ד [ו]הרמו שר מן שר [חזר]ד [ו]העמקו חרץ$   
 $\text{מן חרצה 21 [ו]אשא ידי אל בעלשמין ויענני בעלשמין [ז] . . . .$   
 $\text{22 . . . . בעלשמין אלי [ב]יד חזון וביד עדרן [?] ויאמר 23 [אלי] בעלשמין$   
 $\text{אל תזחל כי אנה המלכותך ואנה אק[ם] עמך ואנה אחצרך מן כל$   
 $\text{24 [?] מלכיא אל זי 25 [מחאו עליך מצר ויאמר ל . . . . 26 [כ]ל$   
 $\text{מלכיא אל זי מחאו עלי . . . . [מצר] . . . . 27 . . . . ושורא$   
 $\text{זנה ? . . . .}$

II.

מלכה בגוה . . . . .<sup>3</sup> לרכב [ו]לפרש . . . . .<sup>2</sup> ק . . . . . [חזר]ך . . . . .<sup>1</sup>  
 אנ[יה] . . . . . ת חזרך והוספ[ת] לה[ה] אית כל מחנת . . . . .<sup>6</sup> א ושמתה  
 מל[כנא] . . . . .<sup>7</sup> תה א . . . . .<sup>6</sup> סניא אל בכל גף . . . . .<sup>6</sup> בנית בתי  
 אלהן בכל[ל] . . . . .<sup>10</sup> י ובנית אית . . . . .<sup>11</sup> [א]ית אפש ו . . . . .<sup>12</sup>  
 יא בית . . . . .<sup>13</sup> [ו]שמת קד[ם] אל[יור] נצבא זנה וכ[תב]ת[ת]ה  
 אית אשר ידי . . . . .<sup>16</sup> [מ]ן יהנע אית א[שר] . . . . .<sup>17</sup> [ידי] זכר מלך; חמ[ת] ול[ע]ש  
 מן נצבא זנה ו[מ]ן . . . . .<sup>19</sup> יהנע נצבא זנה מן [ק]ד[ם] אלור ויהנסנה  
 [מ]ן [אש]רה או מן ישלח ב . . . . .<sup>22</sup> ת[ה] . . . . .  
 . . . . .<sup>23</sup> [בע]לשמים וא[ל]יור[ר] . . . . .<sup>25</sup> ושמש ושהר . . . . .  
 ואלה[י] שמי[ן] ואלה[י] ארק ובעלע . . . . .<sup>27</sup> אשא ואית . . . . .  
 . . . . .<sup>28</sup> ש . . . . . ש . . . . .

III.

. . . . . שם זכר ושם . . . . .<sup>2</sup>

In the translation which follows the mark of interrogation indicates a word or passage of which the meaning or reading is uncertain.

I.

(*Front of Stelè.*)

<sup>1</sup> The *stelè* which Zakir, king of Hamath and La'ash, set up to Alur. <sup>2</sup> [This day ?] I, Zakir, king of Hamath and La'ash, . . . ? . . . and Baal-shamain [Baal of heaven] . . . <sup>3</sup> me, and stood with me; and Baal-shamain made me king . . . <sup>4</sup> . . . Bar-hadad, son of Hazael, king of Aram, assembled (?) and united against me . . . <sup>5</sup> -teen kings; Bar-hadad and his army [*lit.* camp], Bar-gash and his army, the king <sup>6</sup> of Kaweh and his army, the king of 'Amk and his army, the king of Gurgum <sup>7</sup> and his army, the king of Sam'al and his army, the king of Malaz and his army: <sup>8</sup> . . . seven[-teen kings] <sup>9</sup> were they with their armies. And all these kings laid siege against Haz[rach]; <sup>10</sup> and they raised up a wall higher than the wall of Hazrach, and made a trench deeper than its trench. <sup>11</sup> And I lifted up my hands unto Baal-shamain, and Baal-shamain answered me. <sup>12</sup> [And] Baal-shamain [sent or spake] unto me by the hand of seers and by the hand of . . . ? . . . ;

[and] Baal-shamain [said <sup>13</sup> unto me,] Fear not; for *I* have made thee k[ing, and *I* will <sup>14</sup> stan]d with thee, and *I* will deliver thee from all [these kings who] <sup>15</sup> have driven siege-works against thee. And he said to . . . <sup>16</sup> all these kings who have driven [siege-works] . . . <sup>17</sup> . . . and this wall wh[ic]h . . .

## II.

(*On the left-hand side of the Stelè.*)

<sup>1</sup> . . . Hazrach . . . <sup>2</sup> . . . to the chariots and horsemen . . . <sup>3</sup> his (*or* its) king within it . . . I <sup>4</sup> have . . . Hazrach, and have added <sup>5</sup> [to it] all the territory (?) of . . . <sup>6</sup> to . . .; and I made him king <sup>7</sup> . . . <sup>8</sup> . . . these enemies on all sides. <sup>9</sup> I built houses (i.e. temples) of gods in all <sup>10</sup> my . . . And I built . . . <sup>11</sup> . . . ? . . . and . . . <sup>12</sup> . . . the house (temple) . . . <sup>13</sup> . . . And I set up before Al-<sup>14</sup>ur] this *stelè*; and I wrote (on) <sup>15</sup> it the . . . ? . . . of my hands. <sup>16</sup> Whosoever shall remove (?) the . . . ? . . . of [the hands of] Zakir, king of Hamath and <sup>18</sup> La'ash from this *stelè*, and whosoever <sup>19</sup> shall remove (?) this *stelè* from be<sup>20</sup>fore Alur, and destroy (?) it from <sup>21</sup> its [pla]ce, or whosoever shall send away . . . <sup>22</sup> . . . ? . . . <sup>23</sup> . . . [Ba]al-shamain, and A[<sup>24</sup>ur] . . . and Shamash, and Sahar, <sup>25</sup> . . . and the gods of heaven <sup>26</sup> and the gods of earth, and Baal 'A . . . <sup>27</sup> . . . , and . . . <sup>28</sup> . . .

## III.

(*On the right-hand side of the Stelè.*)

<sup>1</sup> . . . <sup>2</sup> the name of Zakir, and the name of . . .

The inscription, both by its contents and by the peculiar type of Aramaic in which it is written, takes us into the same region as Zenjirli, about seventy miles north of Aleppo, and Nêrab, a few miles south-east of Aleppo, from both of which places some very interesting inscriptions, dating from the eighth century B.C., and written in Aramaic

of the same character, were found in 1891 (see text, translations, and notes in G. A. Cooke's *North-Semitic Inscriptions*, 1903, pp. 159-91; extracts, also, in the essay by the present writer, on archaeology as illustrating the Old Testament, in Hogarth's *Authority and Archaeology*, pp. 131-3). The Aramaic-speaking people in all this region evidently at this time used the same dialect, worshipped largely the same deities,—some Assyrian, some not otherwise known,—and had the same civilization. The date of the inscription must be about B.C. 800 \*: it is consequently the oldest Aramaic inscription at present known, and only about fifty years later than the inscription of Mesha on the "Moabite Stone."

I append a few notes which may help to explain or illustrate the inscription; for the historical and geographical particulars I am largely indebted to M. Pognon, to whose full and lucid expositions I must refer those desirous of further details.

I. <sup>1</sup> *The stelè which . . . set up.* Cf. l. 1 of Bar-rekub's inscription (Cooke, *North-Semitic Inscriptions*, 62. 1).

*Zakir.* So vocalized by M. Pognon, because the name is thus found in Assyrian inscriptions.

*Hamath.* Of course, well known from the O.T. On the Orontes, about 110 miles north of Damascus, and eighty miles south of both Aleppo and Antioch.

*La'ash.* Not otherwise known; from the context, it cannot have been far from Hamath.

*Alur.* A deity mentioned here for the first time.

<sup>2</sup> The restoration 'this day' is very uncertain, the form נַנְיָ being also questionable. Mr. Pognon's rendering of the words represented in the English by a ? is not satis-

\* Hazael, Bar-hadad's father, is known to have been reigning in the eighteenth year of Shalmaneser II (= 842 B.C.)—the same year in which Shalmaneser received the "tribute of Jehu" (see *K.B.* i. 1, p. 141; or *Authority and Archaeology*, p. 95).

factory; and the photograph of the inscription is not distinct enough to enable the correctness of the reading to be tested. *Baal-shamain*. "Baal of heaven" is constantly mentioned in Phoen. and Aram. inscriptions: see Cooke, *op. cit.*, p. 45. Zakir speaks of "Baal of heaven" as having given him his throne.

<sup>3</sup> *Stood with me*. So in Panammu's inscription (*ib.* 61. (2, 3).

<sup>4</sup> *Bar-hadad*. The *Ben-hadad* (II), son of Hazael, of 2 Kings xiii. 3, 25. The Aram. "*Bar-hadad*" is in the O.T. Hebraized into "*Ben-hadad*"; in the Pesh. the Aramaic form is used. Hadad was one of the principal Aramaean deities—probably a storm-god; Panammu (*ib.* 61) places him at the head of the gods whom he names and attributes all his successes to him.

<sup>5</sup> [. . . ]*teen kings*. One is reminded of the thirty-two kings who accompanied the first Ben-hadad on his expedition against Samaria (1 Kings xx. 1, 16).

*Bar-gash*. "Gash" is presumably the name of a divinity. M. Pognon asks whether שרנש should not be read for שרנש on the seal, *C.I.S.* II. i. 105.

<sup>6</sup> *Kaweh*. A *Kawi* is mentioned by Shalmaneser II as twice invaded by him, after crossing the Amanus-range (*K. B.* i. 1, 141, l. 101; 145, l. 132 f.), and consequently in Cilicia. Though 140–150 miles north of Hamath, it is doubtless the place here meant; for other places in the same neighbourhood are mentioned immediately afterwards.

*'Amk*. Still, says M. Pognon, el-'Amk, a low and marshy tract, south and south-east of the Lake of Antioch, a few miles north-east of the town. See the map at the end of Sachau's *Reise in Syrien und Mesopotamien* (1883), where it is marked.

*Gurgum*. Mentioned in Bar-rekub's inscription (Cooke, 62. 15), and also by Shalmaneser II (*K.B.* i. 156, 172). It

must have been somewhere in the Amanus district; see Mr. Cooke's note, p. 179, and the map at the end of *KAT.*<sup>2</sup>, where it is marked on the north of Zenjirli and Sam'al.

*Sam'al.* Bar-rekub, in one of the inscriptions found at Zenjirli, styles himself "king of Sam'al" (Cooke, 63. 2); it was thus no doubt the country about Zenjirli. It is also mentioned by several of the Assyrian kings, in connexions pointing to the same region (see the note *ibid.*, p. 182; and the map just referred to). Of Malaz nothing is known.

◦ דַּמּוּ *they.* As in Egyptian Aramaic (Cooke, 76 B 4, and the papyri edited by Sayce and Cowley), and in the Aramaic of Ezra (in Daniel the form used is דַּמּוּן).

אֶל *these* (so ii. 12). As Ezr. v. 15 Qrê. In Nabataean, Cappadocian, and Egyptian Aramaic, and in Jer. .x. 11 the form used is אֶלָּה (see *Oxf. Heb. Lex.*, p. 1080).

*Hazrach.* Apparently a fortified city belonging to Zakir. Is Hazrach, M. Pognon asks, rather than *Hatarikka* (Delitzsch, *Paradies*, p. 279; *DB.*, or *EB.*, s.v. *Hadrach*), the *Hadrach* (חַדְרַח) of Zech. ix. 1?

<sup>11</sup> *And I lifted up my hands unto . . . and . . . answered me.* Both thoroughly Biblical expressions, the words, even to the "waw consecutive," being actually the same: see Ps. xxviii. 2, and Ps. iii. 4 Heb., cxx. 1. This is the first time that the "waw consecutive" (though used in Moabitish) has been found in Aramaic; but the Aramaic of this district was known before, from the inscriptions found at Zenjirli and Nêrab, to be curiously coloured with words and forms otherwise characteristic of Hebrew (see below). There is another instance of the waw consecutive in וַיֹּאמֶר, "and he said," in l. 15 (and doubtless also in l. 13). The perfect with the simple waw is, however, more commonly used in the inscription.

<sup>12</sup> *by the hand of seers.* It is interesting to find that there were "seers" in Hamath as well as in Israel. The word



is the same (except in form) as that used in Hebrew : Isa. xxix. 10, xxx. 10 ; Amos vii. 12, etc.

עדרן. A word of unknown meaning. An error for עדר ("by the hand of *helpers*")—ד and ר being almost as similar in the old characters as in the square characters—might be thought of : but some more distinctive term would rather be expected.

<sup>13</sup> אל not (μῆ). So in Panammu's inscription (Cooke, 62. 22, 23, 29), and thrice in Daniel. Common in Hebrew, but not used in ordinary Aramaic.

*Fear* not. דחל, corresponding to the ordinary Aram. דחל : the *d* of ordinary Aramaic becoming in this dialect (as in Hebrew) *z* (so *zi*, "which," for "*di*," etc. : see Cooke, p. 185). So once in Hebrew, Job xxxii. 6. The usual Hebrew for "fear" is a different word altogether (ירא).

<sup>14</sup> *deliver*. חצל—apparently the same as the Hebrew חלץ (Ps. l. 15, lxxxii. 7 [Heb. 8], etc.), and perhaps an error of the stone-cutter for חלץ. This root is not, however, known to occur in other Aramaic with the meaning "deliver."

<sup>15</sup> מוחא. In Syr. מוחא is *to strike* : in Hebrew the word (with the א consonantal as here) occurs three times of striking (i.e. clapping) the hands (Ezek. xxv. 6 ; Isa. lv. 12 ; Ps. xcvi. 8). מצר can hardly be anything but the Hebrew מצור *circumvallation, siege-works* : so the use of מוחא with this is peculiar. M. Pognon compares the Syr. phrase מוחא קרבא, "bellum *intulit*."

ויאמר. With *waw* consecutive, exactly as in Hebrew.

ii. 5, אית. The mark of the accus., spelt as in Phoenician. In Hebrew את ; in ordinary Aramaic (very rare in Syriac) ית. So ll. 10, 11, 15, etc.

<sup>8</sup> חנף (חנף). *Wing, fig. side* ; cf. in Palest. Syriac, Payne Smith, *Thes. Syr.* col. 764.

<sup>16</sup> חנע. A word recurring in l. 19, but otherwise unknown.

<sup>20</sup> חנס. So in the Aramaic of Nêrab (Cooke, 64. 5, followed,

as here, by "from its place"; 65. 8, 9); but not otherwise known.

<sup>21</sup> אַרְרָה [אַרְרָה]. As *ibid.*, 64. 8. In ordinary Aramaic, "place" is אַרְרָה; for the אַרְרָה, see Cooke, p. 185.

<sup>24</sup> *Shamash*. The sun-god, mentioned also in the inscriptions of Zenjirli and Nêrab (*ibid.*, 61. 2, 3, etc.; 62. 22; 64. 9).

*Sahar*. The moon-god (in the Aram. of the Targums, and in Syriac, סַרְרָה means the moon; cf. in Hebrew *sahārōn*, moon-shaped ornament, crescent, Judges viii. 21, 26; Isa. iii. 18), mentioned also in the two Nêrab inscriptions, *ibid.*, 64. 9 (beside Shamash), 65. 9, which are themselves sepulchral inscriptions of two priests of Sahar (64. 1 f., 65. 1). In Assyrian the name of the moon-god was *Sin* (in "Sennacherib," i.e. *Sin-ahê-erib*, "Sin has increased the brothers," and in all probability in "Sinai." Sin was largely worshipped by the Assyrians; and especially, among other places, at Ḥaran, where he was called *Bel Harrân*, "lord of Ḥaran" (cf. "My lord Baal-ḥaran" on a bas-relief of Bar-rekub in the Berlin Museum, Lidzbarski, *Nord-Sem. Epigraphik*, p. 444): from Ḥaran his worship may have been introduced into Zenjirli, Nêrab, and Hamath (cf. Cooke, pp. 187, 188). No doubt the illegible parts of ll. 22-27 contained words stating what the gods named were desired to do to any one who injured or removed the *stelè*: cf. Cooke, 64. 5-10, "Whosoever thou art that shalt remove (?) this image and couch (sarcophagus) from its place, may Sahar and Shamash and Nikal and Nusk pluck thy name and thy place out of life, and kill thee with the death of one worthy of effacement,\* and cause thy seed to perish."

<sup>26</sup> אַרְרָה. In ordinary Aramaic אַרְרָה. The same form is, however, found in several other Aramaic dialects, and in

\* Nöldeke, *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*, 1908, p. 205,—at least with a ?

the Aramaic verse Jeremiah x. 11 : see *Oxf. Heb. Lex.*, p. 1083; and, on the phonetic equation which the variation implies, Cooke, p. 185 (where other examples are quoted).

The Hebraizing features in the inscription are מִחַנַּת (a *feminine* form, not as in Hebrew a *masculine*), *camp, host*, I. 5-8 (so Cooke]62. 13, 16, 17; in ordinary Aramaic מִשְׁרִיתָא); מִצָּר, *circumvallation*, II. 9, 15; חָרַץ, *trench*, I. 10 (Dan. ix. 25); נָשָׂא, *to lift up*, I. 11; אֵל, *to*, I. 12; אֵל, *not*, I. 13; כִּי, *for*, I. 13; חָצַל, *deliver*, I. 14; the *sh* for *th* in אֲשֶׁר־[אֵל], II. 21; and the *waw* consecutive.

M. Pognon hopes at some future time to be able to discover the rest of the *stelè*; and hence the reason why he will not state where the part which he has found is. He gives (Preface to Part i.) a lamentable picture of the ignorance of the natives. The Arab and Kurd peasants believe that stones with inscriptions contain gold, or at least that the inscriptions state where treasures are concealed; so they break in pieces any inscription in which they see a stranger to be interested. In 1899 M. Pognon took squeezes of some beautiful Hittite inscriptions near a village on the Euphrates; when he revisited the spot a few years afterwards he found the inscriptions all destroyed. At Eski-harran it was believed that inscriptions were deeds giving Europeans a title to property in Syria, which it was feared they would come and claim; so another excuse was found for destroying them. The country about Zenzirli abounds in mounds promising much to the excavator; and systematic exploration would certainly bring to light more Aramaic inscriptions of the same interesting kind as those which have been already discovered: it is thus earnestly to be wished that such exploration could be speedily resumed.

S. R. DRIVER.