

What is the significance of Syria/Aram in the Bible?

<https://www.gotquestions.org/Syria-Aram-in-the-Bible.html>

Some translations of the Bible use the word Syria, and others use the word Aram, but both names refer to the same nation. The borders of Syria or Aram are much the same as they were in biblical times, with a central location being its capital, Damascus. Syria/Aram plays a significant role throughout the Bible.

Following the worldwide flood mentioned in Genesis, Shem became the father of Aram, whose descendants became the people known as Arameans (Genesis 10:22), who settled in the area of Mesopotamia. Later, God called Abraham from that area. In Canaan, Abraham sent his servant to find Isaac a wife, and he sent the servant to his brother's family, who lived in Aram Naharaim, near the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers (Genesis 24:10). Rebekah and her brother Laban both lived in Aram, and Jacob is later recorded as fleeing to Paddan Aram (Genesis 28:5). Because of Jacob's long stay in the area of Aram, he is later referred to as a "wandering Aramean" (Deuteronomy 26:5).

The Arameans also fought against Israel frequently in the Old Testament. One of the earliest conflicts with Aram was during the time of the judges, when the king of Aram Naharaim was used by God to subject the Israelites for eight years because of their idolatry (Judges 3:7-8). Once the Israelites repented, God raised up Othniel, Caleb's younger brother, to free them from the Arameans (Judges 3:9-11). During the times of the kings, the Arameans often fought against Israel, especially in David's reign (2 Samuel 8:3-10; 10:6-8; 1 Chronicles 18:3-4). Ben-Hadad, one of the more powerful rulers of Aram, fought against the northern kingdom of Israel, but he failed in his attack because the Lord promised to give the vast Aramean army into King Ahab's hands (1 Kings

20:12-13). Furthermore, it was at the hand of the Arameans that the wicked Ahab met his ruin, as the prophet Micaiah had prophesied (1 Kings 22:28, 37-38).

Interestingly, Paul's conversion experience happened in the geographical location of Damascus in Syria, controlled by the Romans at that time. Paul saw the resurrected Lord Jesus on the road to Damascus, where he was traveling to persecute Christians (Acts 9:1-6). On the Damascus Road, Jesus commissioned Paul to be the Apostle to the Gentiles, stating, "I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me" (Acts 26:17-18).

It was also in a Syrian city, Antioch, that believers in Christ were first called Christians (Acts 11:26). Barnabas had taken Paul to Antioch to spend time at the church there, and they both taught "great numbers of people" during their stay (Acts 11:25-26), and "the church at Antioch was destined to become the base of operations for Paul's missionary journeys" (Stanley Toussaint, Bible Knowledge Commentary, John Walvoord and Roy Zuck, ed., David C. Cook, 1983, p. 383).