

...two hundred and thirty two; to lead the van. The smallness of the number indicates the modest size of Ahab's kingdom, as does also the seven thousand forming the main body of the army. This, however, was likely not Israel's whole army, but rather the number which had found refuge in Samaria when the Syrians swooped down on the land.

III. A Mighty Victory, 16-21.

Vs. 16. *At noon*; a favorable hour for a sally, when, in that hot Eastern land, the besiegers would be resting. *Drinking himself drunk*; as if to mark his utter contempt of the foe.

Vs. 17, 18. *Ben-hadad sent out . . . they told him*. The king received tidings from the pickets of his army on duty. *Men . . . out of Samaria*; the 232 of v. 15. *Take them alive*. Wine had so taken away Benhadad's wits, that, instead of drawing up his soldiers in battle array, he sent them to capture alive the tiny band of Israelitish youths.

Vs. 19-21. *The army . . . followed them*. The 7,000 (v. 15) hastened to take advantage of the confusion in the Syrian ranks. The meaning becomes clearer if vs. 20, 21 are transposed. *The king . . . went out*; Ahab leading his army. *Smote the horses and chariots*. The Greek Old Testament reads "captured" instead of "smote." *Slew every one his man*. Perhaps the meaning is that "each repeatedly killed his man." *Syrians fled . . . Israel pursued*. The defeat became a complete rout. *Ben-hadad . . . escaped on an horse*; on a chariot horse, not being able to secure a riding horse.

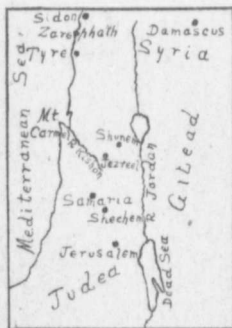
Light from the East

By Rev. Professor R. Davidson, D.D., Toronto

BENHADAD OF DAMASCUS—The tribes of Israel were never without rivals. When they were trying to establish themselves in Canaan there were Moabites, Ammonites and Midianites trying to do the same. Champion after champion arose to vindicate his tribesmen. Thus Ehud fought against Moab and Jephthah against Ammon. Thus Gideon drove back the Midianites to the East, and Shamgar and Samson and Saul and David drove back the Philistines to the West. At last the land had rest; the kingdom was firmly established under the hand of David.

David's reign saw the advent of another and a very tenacious rival. For while Israel was making good her hold on the hills and valleys of Palestine, kinsmen of Israel were building up a wealthy and powerful state in the Lebanon country with Damascus as its capital. For 250 years the struggle went on intermittently between Israel and the Syrians of Damascus. Success was not always on the same side, but pressure from the north steadily abridged Israel's opportunities, cut off her trade and robbed her of territory in Galilee and beyond the Jordan. The only relief Israel had came when Assyrian armies from the far East ravaged Damascus and left her helpless for a generation. In the days of Ahab and his sons the pressure was very heavy and embarrassment of life at Samaria very galling. The hated memory of Benhadad and Hazael, kings at Damascus, lives still in the words of Amos (see Amos, ch. 1).

THE GEOGRAPHY LESSON



Samaria (the Hebrew name "Shomeron" means a watch mountain). The ancient city was built upon a hill rising from 300 to 400 feet above a broad fertile valley and isolated on all sides but the east, where it is connected with the hills by a low, narrow saddle. Commanding the roads from Shechem northwards

to the great Valley of Esdraelon and westward to the coast and situated within easy reach of the Mediterranean, no better site could have been selected as the fortified capital of the Northern kingdom of Israel. "On three sides it is surrounded and overlooked by hills clothed with olive and vine, but they are beyond the range of catapult and bow, and so were not a source of danger. On the fourth side the hills are low, and the view over them to the west, with the blue waters of the Mediterranean in the distance, is one of exceptional beauty. This charm of position, in a rich 'fat' valley, bordered by