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The Elisha-Hazael Paradigm and the Kingdom of Israel: The Politics of God in Ancient Syria-Palestine (Bibleworld)

Hadi Ghantous

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This study deals with the most important king of the Aramaean kingdom of Damascus, Hazael, and the impact he had on biblical literature, which goes beyond the few verses that mention him explicitly in the Book of Kings and the Book of the Twelve. The extra-biblical sources reveal that Hazael managed to create a large kingdom and to expand his authority over the whole of Syria-Palestine, including the Kingdom of Israel and the House of David, during the second half of the ninth century BCE. The Bible presents that power of Hazael as oppression of both kingdoms, yet the biblical writers elaborated a much more nuanced portrait of Hazael than first meets the eye. In the Elijah-Elisha cycles, Hazael provides a theological interpretative paradigm, the Elisha-Hazael paradigm, which provides in the Book of Kings and in the Book of the Twelve (especially in the books of Amos and Jonah) the key to explain God's mysterious dealings with Israel and Israel's enemies. Hazael is presented as a faithful agent of YHWH, who fulfils the divine plan. Beyond the power Hazael yielded across the Levant in his life time, the Elisha-Hazael paradigm reveals his enduring influence in Judah and in biblical literature.

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