Damascus

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Damas'cus (Heb. *Damme'sek*, דַּמֶּשֶׂק [sometimes *Darme'sek*, דַּרמֶשֶׂק, by resolution of the Dagesh, 1Ch 18:5-6; once *Dumme'sek*, דּוּמֶשֶׂק, probably by erroneous transcription for the last, 2Ki 16:10], signifying activity [Gesenius, *Thes*. p. 345 sq.], from its commerce; Arab, *Dtimeshk*; Gr. Δαμασκός), one of the most ancient, and at all times one of the most important of Oriental cities. It is called by the natives *Es-Sham*, and is capital of an important pashalic of this latter name, and indeed is the chief or capital city of Syria. It was sometimes spoken of by the ancients as an Arabian city, but in reality it belongs to Syria (Coele-Syria, Strabo 16:756; Ptolemy, v. 15, 22). In 2Sa 8:5-6, "the Syrians of Damascus" are spoken of, and the words "Syria of Damascus" are found in Isa 7:8. It is expressly said, "the head of Syria is Damascus;" also, Isa 17:3, "the kingdom" is to cease "from Damascus;" so that this' place was obviously the metropolis of a Syrian empire. It gave name (Syria Damascena, Plin. *Hist. Natural*. v. 13) to a district of Syria, which, in 1Ch 19:6, is distinguished as "Syria-Maachah" in the A.V:. The city is even mentioned in the cuneiform inscriptions (q.v.). There has never been any doubt of its identity.

1. *Situation*. —Damascus occupies the most beautiful site in Syria, or perhaps in all Western Asia. At the eastern base of Anti-Libanus lies a vast plain, having an elevation of about 2200 feet above the level of the sea. It is bounded on the south by the river Awaj, with its branches, which separates it from Ituraea. On the east a little group of conical hills divides it

from the great Arabian desert. Its form is triangular, and its area about 500
square miles. Only about one half of this is now inhabited, or indeed habitable; but in richness and beauty this half is unsurpassed. It owes all its advantages to its rivers (2Ki 5:12). The plain is about 400 stadia from the Mediteranean, and from six to eight days' journey from Jerusalem. Its celebrity is of early date. Strabo (xvi, p. 756) speaks of it in eulogistic terms. In a religious point of view, also, its repute was great. Julian (*Ep*. 24) terms it "the great and sacred Damascus, surpassing every city both in the beauty of its temples and the magnitude of its shrines, as well as the timeliness of its seasons, the limpidness of its fountains, the volume of its waters, and the richness of its soil." The Abana (q.v.), now called Barada, rising high up on the western flank of Anti-Libanus, forces its way through the chain, running for some time among the mountains, till suddenly it bursts through a narrow cleft upon the open country east of the hills, and diffuses fertility far and wide. "From the edge of the mountain-range," says a modern traveler, "you look down on the plain of Damascus. It is here seen in its widest and fullest perfection, with the visible explanation of the whole secret of its great and enduring charm, that which it must have had when it was the solitary seat of civilization in Syria, and which it will have as long as the world lasts. The river is visible at the bottom, with its green banks, rushing through the cleft; it bursts forth, and as if in a moment scatters over the plain, through a circle of thirty miles, the same verdure which had hitherto been confined to its single channel... Far and wide in front extends the level plain, its horizon bare, its lines of surrounding hills bare, all bare far away on the road to Palmyra and Bagdad. In the midst of this plain lies at your feet the vast lake or island of deep verdure, walnuts and apricots

waving above, corn and grass below; and in the midst of this mass of foliage rises, striking out its white arms of streets hither and thither, and its white minarets above the trees which embosom them, the city of Damascus. On the right towers the snowy height of Hermon, overlooking the whole scene. Close behind are the sterile limestone mountains — so that you stand literally between the living and the dead" (Stanley, *Palestine*, p. 402). Another writer mentions among the produce of the plain in question "walnuts, pomegranates, figs, plums, apricots, citrons, pears, and apples" (Addison's *Dam. and Palmyra*, 2:92). Olivetrees are also a principal feature of the scene. Besides the main stream of the Barada, which runs directly through the town, supplying its public cisterns, baths, and fountains, a number of branches are given off to the right and to the left, which irrigate the meadows and corn-fields; turning what would otherwise be a desert into a garden. These various streams, although greatly weakened in volume, flow on towards the east for about twenty miles, when they pour their waters into two small and shallow lakes, which lie upon the verge of the desert. Two other streams, the Wady Helbon upon the north, and the Awaj upon the south, which flows direct from Hermon, increase the fertility of the Damascene plain, and contend for' the honor of representing the "Pharpar" (q.v.) of Scripture. The city stands on the banks of the main stream, about two miles distant from, and 500 feet below the pass through which it emerges into the plain. The modern Oriental architecture does not bear close inspection, but when seen from a distance it is singularly imposing. Tapering minarets and swelling domes, tipped with golden crescents, rise up in every direction from the confused mass of white terraced roofs, while in some places their tops gleam like diamonds amid the deep green foliage. In the center of the city stands

the great mosque, and near it the massive towers of the castle.
⇒Bible concordance for DAMASCUS.

2. *History*. —According to Josephus (*Ant*. 1:6) Damascus was founded by Uz, the son of Aram, and grandson of Shem. It is first mentioned in Scripture in connection with Abraham, whose steward was a native of the place (Ge 15:2). We may gather from the name of this person, as well as from the statement of Josephus, which connects the city with the Arammeans, that it was a Shemitic settlement. According to a tradition preserved in the native writer Nicolaus, Abraham staid for some time at Damascus after leaving Charran and before entering the promised land, and during his stay was king of the place. "Abraham's name was," he. says, "even in his own day, familiar in the mouths of the Damascenes, and a village was shown where he dwelt, which was called after him" (*Fragm*. 30). This last circumstance would seem, however, to conflict with the notion of Abraham having been king, since in that case he would have dwelt in the capital. In the village of Buzeh, three miles north of the city, is a highly venerated shrine, called for the last eight centuries "the house of Abraham." (On these fables, see Julian, *Epist*. 24, p. 392; *Cellarii Notitice*, 2:442 sq.; Mannert, VI, 1:407 sq.; Justin, 36:2; Isidorus, *Origg*. 15:1; D'Herbelot, *Biblioth*. Or. 1:70.)
SEE ABRAHAM.

Nothing more is known of Damascus until the time of David, when "the Syrians of Damascus came to succor Hadadezer, king of Zobah," with whom David was at war (2Sa 8:5; 1Ch 18:5). On' this occasion David "slew of the Syrians 22,000 men," and in consequence of this victory became completely master of the whole territory, which he garrisoned with Israelites. "David put garrisons in Syria of Damascus; and the Syrians became servants to David, and brought gifts" (2Sa 8:6). Nicolaiis of Damascus said that the name of the king

who reigned at this time was Hadad; and he ascribes to him a dominion not only over Damascus, but "over all Syria except Phoenicia" (*Fragm.* 31). He noticed his *attack* upon David, and related that many battles were fought between them, the last, wherein he suffered defeat, being "*'upon the Euphrates*." According to this writer, Hadad the first was succeeded by a son, who took the same name, as did his descendants for ten generations. But this is irreconcilable with Scripture (see Miller, *Origo regni Damasc.* Lips. 1714; also in Ikenii *Thesaur.* 1:721 sq.). It appears that in the reign of Solomon a certain Rezon, who had been a subject of Hadadezer, king of Zobah, and had escaped when David conquered Zobah, made himself master of Damascus, and established his own rule there (1Ki 11:5-23). He was "an adversary to Israel all the days of Solomon... and he abhorred Israel, and reigned over Syria" (Joseph. *Ant.* 8:7, 6). Afterwards the family of Hadad appears to have recovered the throne, and a Benhadad, who is probably Hadad III of Nicolaus, a grandson of the antagonist of David, is found in league with Baasha, king of Israel, against Asa (1Ki 15:19; 2Ch 16:3), and afterwards in league with Asa against Baasha (1Ki 15:20). He made a successful invasion of the Israelitish territory in the reign of that king; and in the reign of Omnri he not only captured a number of Israelitish cities, which he added to his own dominions, but even seems to have exercised a species of lordship over Samaria itself, in which he acquired the right of "making himself streets" (1Ki 20:34; comp. Nic. D. *Fragm.* 31, *ad fin.*). He was succeeded by his son, Hadad IV (the Benhadad II of Scripture, and the Ben-idri of the Assyrian inscriptions), who came at the head of thirty-two subject kings against Ahab, and laid siege to Samaria (1Ki 20:1). The attack was unsuccessful, and was followed by wars, in which victory declared itself unmistakably on the side of the Israelites; and at last

Benhadad was taken prisoner, and forced to submit to a treaty whereby he gave up all that his father had gained, and submitted in his turn to the suzerainty of Ahab (1Ki 20:13-34). The terms of the treaty were perhaps not observed. At any rate, three years afterwards war broke out afresh, through the claim of Ahab to the city of Ramoth-Gilead (1Ki 22:1-4). The defeat and death of Ahab at that place (ib. 15-37) seems to have enabled the Syrians of Damascus to resume the offensive. Their bands ravaged the lands of Israel during the reign of Jehoram; and they even undertook at this time a second siege of Samaria, which was frustrated miraculously (2Ki 6:24; 2Ki 7:6-7). After this, we do not hear of any more attempts against the Israelitish capital. The cuneiform inscriptions show that towards the close of his reign Benhadad was exposed to the assaults of a great conqueror, who was bent on extending the dominion of Assyria over Syria and Palestine. Three several attacks appear to have been made by this prince upon Benhadad, who, though he had the support of the Phoenicians, the Hittites, and the Hamathites, was unable to offer any effectual opposition to the Assyrian arms. His troops were worsted in several engagements, and in one of them he lost as many as 20,000 men. It may have been these circumstances which encouraged Hazael, the servant of Benhadad, to murder him and seize the throne, which Elisha had declared would certainly one day be his (2 Kings viii. 15). He may have thought that the Syrians would willingly acquiesce in the removal of a ruler tinder whom they had suffered so many disasters. The change of rulers was not at first productive of any advantage to the Syrians. Shortly after the accession of Hazael (about B.C. 884), he was in his turn attacked by the Assyrians, who defeated him with great loss amid the fastnesses of Anti-Libanus. However, in his other wars he was more fortunate. He repulsed an attack on

Ramoth-Gilead, made by Ahaziah, king of Judah, and Jehoram, king of Israel, in conjunction (2Ki 8:9-28); ravaged the whole Israelitish territory east of Jordan (2Ki 10:3-32), besieged and took Gath (2Ki 12:17; compare Am 6:2); threatened Jerusalem, which only escaped by paying a heavy ransom (2Ki 12:18); and established a species of suzerainty over Israel, which he maintained to the day of his death, and handed down to Benhadad, his son (2Ki 13:3-7,22). This prince, in the earlier part of his reign, had the same good fortune as his father. Like him, he "oppressed Israel," and added various cities of the Israelites to his own dominion (2Ki 13:25); but at last a deliverer appeared (ver. 5), and Joash, the son of Jehoahaz, 'beat Hazael thrice, and recovered the cities of Israel" (ver. 25). In the next reign still further advantages were gained by the Israelites. Jeroboam II (B.C. cir. 836) is said to have "recovered Damascus" (2Ki 14:28), and though this may not mean that he captured the city, it at least implies that he obtained a certain influence over it. The mention of this circumstance is followed by a long pause, during which we hear nothing of the Syrians, and must therefore conclude that their relations with the Israelites continued peaceable. *SEE BENHADAD*. When they reappear, nearly a century later (B.C. cir. 742), it is as allies of Israel against Judah (2Ki 15:37). We may suspect that the chief cause of the union now established between two powers which had been so long hostile was the necessity of combining to resist the Assyrians, who at the time were steadily pursuing a policy of encroachment in this quarter. Scripture mentions the invasions of Pul (2Ki 15:19; 1Ch 5:26), and Tiglath-Pileser (2Ki 15:29; 1Ch 5:26); and there is reason to believe that almost every Assyrian monarch of the period made war in this direction. It seems to have been during a pause in the struggle that Rezin, king of Damascus, and Pekah, king of Israel,

resolved conjointly to attack Jerusalem, intending to depose Ahaz and set up as king a creature of their own (Isa 7:1-6; 2Ki 16:5). Ahaz may have already been suspected of a friendly feeling towards Assyria, or the object may simply have been to consolidate a power capable of effectually opposing the arms of that country. In either case the attempt signally failed, and only brought about more rapidly the evil against which the two kings wished to guard. Jerusalem successfully maintained itself against the combined attack; but Elath, which had formerly been built by Azariah, king of Judah, in territory regarded as Syrian (2Ki 14:22), having been taken and retained by Rezin (2Ki 16:6), Ahaz was induced to throw himself into the arms of Tiglath-Pileser, to ask aid from him, and to accept voluntarily the position of an Assyrian feudatory (2Ki 16:7-8). The aid sought was given, with the important result that Rezin was slain, the kingdom of Damascus brought to an end, and the city itself destroyed, the inhabitants being carried captive into Assyria (ib. ver. 9; comp. Isa 7:8, and Am 1:5). Among the sculptures lately discovered on the site of Nineveh are thought to be delineations of this siege and capture of Damascus. Rawlinson even reads the name of the city on an obelisk connected with them (Bonomi, *Nineveh*. p. 234 sq.). Assyrian remains have lately been discovered in a mound near Damascus (*Journal of Sacred Literature*, October. 1854, p. 218; January, 1855, p. 469). *SEE ASSYRIA*.
⇒See also the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia.

It was long before Damascus recovered from this serious blow. As Isaiah and Amos had prophesied in the day of her prosperity that Damascus should be "taken away from being a city and be a ruinous heap" (Isa 17:1), that "a fire should be sent into the house of Hazael which should devour the palaces of Benhadad" (Am 1:4), so Jeremiah, writing about B.C. 600, declares "Damascus *is waxed feeble* and turneth herself to

flee, and fear hath seized on her; anguish and sorrows have taken. her as a woman in travail. How is the city of praise *not left*, the city of my joy!" (Jer 49:5-24). Damascus remained a province of Assyria until the capture of Nineveh by the Medes (B.C. 625), when it submitted to the conquerors. Its Wealth and commercial prosperity appear to have declined for a considerable period, probably on account of the ravages of Tiglath- Pileser, and the captivity of the most influential and enterprising of its people. The city was afterwards held in succession by the Egyptians, Babylonians, and Persians. We have no particulars of its history for a period of three centuries. Under the rule of the Persians it was the capital of the province of Syria, and the residence of the satrap. We do not know at what time Damascus was rebuilt, but Strabo says that it was the most famous place in Syria during the Persian period (xvi. 2, § 19). When Darius, the last king of Persia, made his great effort to repress the rising power, and bar the progress of Alexander of Macedon, it was in this city he deposited his family and treasures (Arrian, *Exp*. Al. 2:11). The fate of Damascus, with that of all Western Asia, was decided by the battle of Issus, in which the Persian army was almost annihilated. Damascus now became the capital of a province which Alexander gave to his general Laomedon (Plut. *Vit. Alexandri*). During the long wars which raged between the Seleucide and the Ptolemies, Damascus had no separate history: it sometimes fell to the one, and sometimes to the other. Antioch was founded, and became their favorite residence, and the capital of the Seleucidae; but when the Syrian kingdom was divided in B.C. 126, Damascus was made the second capital. Its territory embraced Coele-Syria, Phoenicia, and the country east of the Jordan, and it was afterwards governed in succession by four princes of the family of Seleucus. Damascus and Antioch thus became the

seats of rival factions, and aspirants after complete sovereignty (Joseph. *Ant*. 13:13, 4, and 15, 1). The last of these princes, Antiochus Dionysus, was killed in battle against Aretas, king of Arabia, and the Damascenes forthwith elected Aretas his successor (Josephus, *Ant*. 13:15,1), B.C. 84. In the year B.C. 64, the Romans, under Pompey, invaded and captured Syria, constituted it a province of the empire, and made Damascus the seat of government (ib. 14:2, 3, and 4, 5; Mos. Choren. 1:14; Appian, *Bell. Mithrid*. p. 224). From Josephus (*War,* 1:2; 25:2; 20:2; comp. Ac 9:2) it appears that its population contained great numbers of Jews.

For twenty years Damascus continued to be the residence of the Roman procurators. The city prospered under their firm and equitable rule, and even after their removal to Antioch did not decline. Strabo, who flourished at this period, describes it as one of the most magnificent cities of the East. Nicolaus, the famous historian and philosopher, the friend of Herod the Great and Augustus, was now one of its citizens (Strabo, *Geogr*. xvi; Josephus, *Ant*. 16:10, 8). But the strong arm of Rome was not sufficient to quell the fiery spirit of the Syrians. The whole country was rent into factions, and embroiled by the unceasing rivalries and wars of petty princes. About the year A.D. 37, a family quarrel led to a war between Aretas, king of Arabia, and Herod Antipas. The Roman governor, Vitellius, was instructed to interfere in favor of the latter; but when he was ready to attack Aretas, who had already driven back Herod, news arrived of the death of the emperor Tiberius. The government of Syria was thus thrown into confusion, and Vitellius returned to Antioch (Joseph. *Ant*. 18:5, 1-3). It appears that now Aretas, taking advantage of the state of affairs, followed up his successes, advanced upon Damascus, and seized the city. It was during his brief rule (or some earlier one) that Paul visited Damascus on his return

from Arabia (Ga 1:16-17). *SEE ARETAS*. His zeal as a missionary, and the energy with which he opposed every form of idolatry, had probably attracted the notice and excited the enmity of Aretas; and consequently, when informed by the Jews that the apostle had returned to the city, he was anxious to secure him, and gave orders to the governor to watch the gates day and night for that purpose (Ac 9:24; 2Co 11:32. See Neander, *Planting and Training of the Christian Church*, 1:106). The Romans adorned Damascus with many splendid buildings, the ruins of which still exist. Some of them were probably designed by Apollodorus, a native of the city, and one of the most celebrated architects of his age, to whose genius we are indebted for one of the most beautiful monuments of ancient Rome, the Column of Trajan (Dion Cass. lxix). A little later it was reckoned to Decapolis (Plin. *Hist. Nat.* v. 16), after which it became a part of the province known as Phcenicia-Libanesia (Hierocl. *Synecd.* p. 717). Christianity was planted in Damascus by Paul himself (Ac 9:20 sq.; Ga 1:12), and obtained a firm footing in the apostolic age. It spread so rapidly among the population that in the time of Constantine the great temple, one of the noblest buildings in Syria, was converted into a cathedral church and dedicated to John the Baptist. When the first general council assembled at Nice, Magnus, the metropolitan of Damascus, was present with seven of his suffragans. But the Roman empire was now waxing feeble, and the religion which, by its establishment as a national institute, ought to have infused the germ of a new life into the declining state, was itself losing its purity and its power. Damascus felt, like other places, the demoralizing tendencies of a corrupt faith. In the beginning of the 7th century a new and terrible power appeared upon the stage of the world's history, destined, in the hands of an all-wise though mysterious Providence, to overthrow a

degenerate empire and chastise an erring Church. In A.D. 634 Damascus opened its gates to the Mohammedans, and thirty years later the first caliph of the Omeiades transferred the seat of his government to that city. It now became for a brief period the capital of a- vast empire, including Syria, Mesopotamia, Persia, Northern Africa, and Spain (Elmacin, *Hist. Sarac.* xiii). In A.D. 750 the Omeiades were supplanted by the dynasty of Abbas, and the court was removed to Bagdad. A stormy period of four centuries now passed over the old city without leaving a single incident worthy of special note. An attack of the Crusaders (A.D. 1148), under the three chiefs, Baldwin, Conrad, and Louis VII, might have claimed a place here had it not been so disgraceful to the Christian arms. It is enough to say that the cross never displaced the crescent on the battlements of Damascus. The reigns of Nureddin and his more distinguished successor Saladin form bright epochs- in the city's history. Two centuries later came Timur, who literally swept Damascus with "the besom Of destruction." Arab writers sometimes call him elWahsh, "the wild beast," and he fully earned that name. Never had Damascus so fearfully experienced the horrors of conquest. Its wealth, its famed manufactures, and its well-filled libraries, were all dissipated in a single day. It soon regained its opulence. A century later it fell into the hands of the Turks, and, with the exception of the brief rule of Ibrahim Pasha, it has ever since remained nominally subject to the sultan.

The Mohammedan population of Damascus have long been known as the greatest fanatics in the East. The steady advance of the Christian community in wealth and influence during the last thirty years has tended to excite their bitter enmity. In July, 1860, taking advantage of the war between the Druses and Maronites, and encouraged also by the Turkish authorities, they suddenly rose against the poor defenseless

Christians, massacred about 6000 of them in cold blood, and left their whole quarter in ashes! Such is the last act in the long history of Damascus. (There is a work by Pieritz on the Persecution of the Jews at Damascus, Lond. 1840.) Damascus is still the largest city in Asiatic Turkey. It contained in 1859 a population of about 150,000. Of these, 6000 were Jews and 15,000
Christians. The Christian community has since been almost exterminated by the above massacre of the greater portion of the males. The pasha ranks with the first officers of the empire, and the city is the head-quarters of the Syrian army.
3. *Commerce.* —Damascus has always been a great center for trade. The difficulties and dangers of the mountain passes to the west of Anti-Libanus made the line of traffic between Egypt and Upper Syria follow the circuitous route by Damascus rather than the direct one through Coele- Syria, while the trade of Tyre with Assyria and the East generally passed naturally through Damascus on its way to Palmyra and the Euphrates. Ezekiel, speaking of Tyre, says, "Damascus was thy merchant in the multitude of the wares of thy making, for the multitude of all riches; in the wine of Helbon and white wool." It would appear from this that Damascus took manufactured goods from the Phoenicians, and supplied them in exchange with wool and wine. The former would be produced in abundance in Coele-Syria and the valleys of the Anti-Libanus range, while the latter seems to have been grown in the vicinity of HELBON, a village still famous for the produce of its vines, ten or twelve miles from Damascus to the north-west (*Geograph. Jour.* 26:44). But the passage- trade of Damascus has probably been at all times more important than its direct commerce. Its merchants must have profited largely by the caravans which continually passed through it on their way to distant countries. It is uncertain whether in early times

it had any important manufactures of its own. According to some expositors, the passage in Am 3:12, which we translate "in Damascus on a couch" (וּבְדַמֶּשֶׂק עֶרֶשׂ), means really "on the damask couch," which would indicate that the Syrian city had become famous for a textile fabric as early as the eighth century B.C. There is no doubt that such a fabric gave rise to our own word, which has its counterpart in Arabic as well as in most of the languages of modern Europe; but it is questionable whether either this, or the peculiar method of working in steel, which has impressed itself in a similar way upon the speech of the world, was invented by the Damascenes before the Mohammedan era. In ancient times they were probably rather a consuming than a producing people, as the passage in Ezekiel clearly indicates. It afterwards became famous for its sword-blades and cutlery; but its best workmen were carried off by Timur to Ispahan. Its chief manufactures are, at present, silks, coarse woolen stuffs, cottons, gold and silver ornaments, and arms. The bazaars are stocked with the products of nearly all nations
— Indian muslins, Manchester prints, Persian carpets, Lyons' silks, Birmingham cutlery, Cashmere shawls, Mocha coffee, and Dutch sugar.

4. *Topography, Antiquities, etc*, — The old city, the nucleus of Damascus, stands on the south bank of the river, and is surrounded by a tottering wall, the foundations of which are Roman, and the superstructure a patchwork of all succeeding ages. It is of an irregular oval form. Its greatest diameter is marked by the "*street called Straight*," which intersects it from east to west, and is about a mile long. This street was anciently divided into three avenues by Corinthian colonnades, and at each end were triple Roman gateways, still in a great measure entire. In the old city were the Christian and Jewish quarters, and the principal buildings and bazaars.

On the north, west, and south are extensive suburbs. The internal aspect of the city is not prepossessing, and great is the disappointment of the stranger when he leaves the delicious environs and enters the gates. Without, nature smiles joyously, the orchards seem to blush at their own beauty, and the breeze is laden with perfumes. Within, all is different. The works of man show sad signs of neglect and decay. The houses are rudely built; the lanes are paved with big rough stones, and partially roofed with ragged mats and withered branches; long-bearded, fanatical-visaged men squat in rows on dirty stalls, telling their beads, and mingling, with muttered prayers to Allah and his prophet, curses deep and terrible on all infidels. The bazaars are among the best in the East. *SEE BAZAAR*. They are narrow covered lanes, with long ranges of open stalls on each side; in these their owners sit as stiff and statue-like as if they had been placed there for show. *SEE MERCHANT*. Each trade has its own quarter. Every group in the bazaars would form a lively picture. All the costumes of Asia are there, strangely grouped with panniered donkeys, gayly-caparisoned mules, and dreamy-looking camels. The principal khans or caravansaries are spacious buildings. They are now used as stores and shops for the principal merchants. The great khan, Assad Pasha, is among the finest in Turkey. A noble Saracenic portal opens on a large quadrangle, ornamented with a marble fountain, and covered by a series of domes supported on square pillars. Many of the mosques are fine specimens of Saracenic architecture. Their deeply-moulded gateways are very beautiful, and the interlaced stone-work around doors and windows is unique. They are mostly built of alternate layers of white and black stone, with string courses of marble arranged in chaste patterns. But they are all badly kept, and many of them are now ruinous.

The *private houses* of Damascus share, with the plain, the

admiration of all visitors. No contrast could be greater than that between the outside and inside. The rough mud-walls and mean doors give poor promise of taste or beauty within. The entrance is always through a narrow winding passage-sometimes even a stable-yard-to the "outer court," where the master has his reception-room, and to which alone male visitors are admitted. Another winding passage leads to the haren (q.v.), which is the principal part of the house. Here is a spacious court, with tesselated pavement, a marble basin in the center, jets d'eau around it, orange, lemon, and citron trees, flowering shrubs. jessamines and vines trained over trellis-work for shade. The rooms all open on this court, intercowrmunication between room and room being almost unknown. On the south side is an open alcove, with marble floor and cushioned dais. The decorations of some of the rooms is gorgeous. The wails of the older houses are wainscoted, carved, and gilt, and the ceilings are covered with arabesque ornaments. In the new houses painting and marble fretwork are taking the place of arabesque and wainscoting. The principal building of Damascus is the *Great Mosque*, the domes and minarets of which are everywhere conspicuous. It occupies one side of a large quadrangular court, flagged with marble, arranged in patterns, and ornamented with some beautiful fountains. Within the mosque are double ranges of Corinthian columns supporting the roof, in the style of the old basilicas. The walls were once covered with Mosaic, representing the holy places of Islam; but this is nearly all gone. In the center is a spacious dome. The building was anciently a temple, with a large cloistered court, like the Temple of the Sun at Palmyra. In the time of Constantine it was made a church and dedicated to John the Baptist, whose head was said to be deposited in a silver casket in one of the crypts. In the 7th century the Moslems took possession of it,

and it has since remained the most venerated of their mosques. It is a singular fact, however, that though it has now been for twelve centuries in possession of the enemies of our faith, though during the whole of that period no Christian has ever been permitted to enter its precincts, yet over its principal door is an inscription embodying one of the grandest and most cheering of Christian truths (Ps 145:13).

The *Castle* is a large quadrangular structure, with high walls and massive flanking towers. It is now a mere shell, the whole interior being a heap of ruins. The foundations are at least as old as the Roman age. It stands at the north-west angle of the ancient wall.

The *traditionary sacred places* of Damascus are the following: A "long, wide thoroughfare" — leading direct from one of the gates to the castle or palace of the pasha — is "called by the guides 'Straight'" (Ac 9:11); but the natives know it among themselves as "the Street of Bazaars" (Stanley, p. 404). The house of Judas is shown, but it is not in the street "Straight" (Pococke, 2:119). That of Ananias is also pointed out. The scene of the conversion is confidently said to be "an open green spot, surrounded by trees," and used as the Christian burial-ground; but this spot is on the eastern side of the city, whereas Paul must have approached from the south or west. Again it appears to be certain that "four distinct spots have been pointed out at different times" (Stanley, p. 403) as the place where the "great light suddenly shined from heaven" (Ac 9:3). The point of the walls at which St. Paul was let down by a basket (Ac 9:25; 2Co 11:33) is also shown; and it. is a fact that houses are still constructed in Damascus in like manner overhanging the wall. In the vicinity of Damascus certain places are shown traditionally connected with the prophet Elisha; but these local legends are necessarily even more doubtful than those which have reference to the

comparatively recent age of the apostles. There are even spots pointed out as the scene of events in the life of Abraham (Stanley, p. 404).

The climate of Damascus is healthful except during July, August, and September, when fevers and opthalmia are prevalent, engendered by filth and unwholesome food. The thermometer ranges from 80° to 87° Fahr. during the summer, and seldom falls below 45° in winter. There is usually a little snow each year. The rain begins about the middle of October, and continues at intervals till May. The rest of the year is dry and cloudless.

A full description of Damascus, with notices, plans, and drawings, is given in Porter's *Five Years in Damascus* (Lond. 1855, 2 vols. 8vo); and in the JOUR. SAC. LIT. July, 1853, p. 245 sq.; Oct. 1853, p. 45 sq.; see also Addison's *Damascus and Palmyra* (ii. 92-196); Walch, *Antiquitates Damasc. illustrate* (Jen. 1757 [a copious treatise, giving all facts known in his day]; also in his *Acta Apostol.* 2:31 sq.); Kelly, *Syria* (chap. xv), and travelers in Palestine generally. See SYRIA.