

# CLASSICAL AND BIBLICAL RECORDS IDENTIFYING THE PHOENICIANS

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Short Quotations May Be Taken From This Article, But Not To Edit

Archaeology as we know it today is a rather young science, which has developed under the burden of many assumptions concerning history which are commonly held, but not necessarily correct. It is also a very inexact science, where various interpretations may be disputed concerning each new discovery. Yet archaeology is not history, archaeologists are not historians, and their field came into its present form only after outgrowing the lesser position it once held as part of the anthropology department in the typical university.

While many archaeologists have a good understanding of the history of the region which they study, such is not at all true of the Near East. Especially in Palestine, the history of the region has been distorted not only due to the incorrect identification of the ancient inhabitants, but also due to its politicization resulting from 'zionism' and the arab-jewish conflict of recent decades. The jews have controlled the archaeology of the region very tightly, especially since the 1960's. Typically, whatever archaeological discovery which suits the jewish view of ancient Israel is labeled as Israelite, while anything which does not appear to be jewish is considered to be Canaanite, Hittite, or Philistine, et al. An example of this is found in a review of *Dan II. A Chronicle of the Excavations and the Late Bronze Age "Mycenaean" Tomb* in the journal *Near Eastern Archaeology*, 67:3 (2004), p. 176, where it is evident that the authors of this study of the findings at Tel Dan in Palestine are quite oblivious to the fact that the Mycenaean (Danae) Greeks and the Israelite tribe of Dan were indeed one and the same people. It would not suit the jews to discover that this branch of the "Indo-European", Aryan Greeks were indeed Hebrews, although on occasion such a discussion has not been avoided. Of course, all of the archaeologists mentioned in connection with the study are jews.

Today's archaeologists, and many 'scholars' in other fields, consider the Philistines and the Hittites – and some even include the tribe of Dan also – to have been "Indo-European" interlopers in the land of Canaan, and this is done in spite of the fact that the Hebrew Bible places Philistines in Canaan before the Israelites existed as a nation (Genesis chapters 21 and 26), and also attests that the Hittites are a branch of the Canaanite race (i.e. Gen 10:15). These same 'scholars' also often label the Canaanites as a branch of the Shemites, yet the Bible attests that both the Philistines and the Canaanites descended from the Hamites (Gen. 10:6-29). Additionally, the

ancient Israelites are commonly believed to have been jews, who are therefore considered to be Shemites. The mixed-race non-Adamic arabs are also errantly considered to be Shemites. In actuality, the Hebrew Bible itself shows that the original Shemites were White people, in the few places where notice is made of racial characteristics (i.e. 1 Sam. 16:12; 17:42; Song of Sol. 5:9-16; Lam. 4:7). It is the separate field of linguistics which is probably most responsible for many of today's errant viewpoints. Language should not be used as a primary means of identifying race, as we in America today should certainly be aware!

So while the jews have abused both archaeology and language studies in order to maintain the false claims made concerning their own identity, the actual historical records, including the Hebrew Bible, are dismissed as error or propaganda, or both, or even as a concocted fiction (as the school of "Biblical Minimalists" often asserts), in various and parallel attempts to rewrite history in a manner which suits the various jewish factions. To this writer, there is no topic in which such practices are more evident, from the earliest applications of the field of archaeology, than in the discussions concerning one of ancient Europe's most illustrious people: those whom the Greeks called *Phoenicians*. Here we shall examine the identity of this great people, from the Bible and from supporting historical sources.

Because the same races of people did not always occupy any particular city, but entire cities or countries often completely changed hands (as is especially evident in the Bible), when discussing any region it is necessary to establish chronological parameters. Before the Israelite Exodus, historical documents show that Egypt exerted authority over the lands of the Levant. In early Egyptian documents, such as inscriptions of the Pharaohs Ahmose I and Thutmose III, and *The Story of Si-nuhe* which dates to the days of Isaac, a place called "the lands of the Fenkhu", apparently on the northern Levant, was mentioned (see *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, James B. Pritchard, ed., Princeton Univ. Press, 1969 [hereinafter *ANET*] pp. 21, 234 and 241). While many point to this and conjecture that these are the people later called *Phoenicians* by the Greeks, the connection is very tenuous, and any similarity in the names is a mere coincidence. The 11th edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* under "Phoenicia" also disclaims the derivation of *Phoenicia* from the Egyptian word, which it says "was apparently used of Asiatic barbarians in general". Rather, *Phoenician* in Greek has a meaning and a definitely discernible etymology. Yet in the Hebrew Old Testament and other documents of the post-Exodus period, there are no people mentioned having any of these names, *Phoenician* or *Fenkhu*.

While it is clear that many of the inhabitants of the Levant and the "Phoenician" coast were called *Canaanite* in ancient Egyptian records (i.e. *ANET* p. 246) and their own (the Amarna letters), in the Hebrew records and in those of other nations both before and after the Israelite occupation of Palestine (ca. 1400-586 B.C.), *Phoenicia* is a Greek term of which our first records are in Homer, who in the 7th century B.C. wrote of events – particularly the Trojan War – which took place just after 1200 B.C. The Classical Greek writers who followed Homer wrote of the Phoenicians almost as if they were a people passed on. While there were still people in Phoenicia who were excellent ship-builders and sailors, they were well past the apex of their culture. And while Phoenician colonies in the west thrived, notably in Carthage and Iberia, the "golden age" of the Phoenicians clearly eclipsed with the demise of Biblical Israel. The

Classical writers never mentioned Israel, so far as I have found, but called the people of the region Phoenicians or Syrians. *Tyre* and *Syria* both came into Greek from the same Hebrew word *Tsor* (6865). The Phoenicians of the Greek writers of the 5th and 4th centuries B.C. were already said to have colonized nearly all of the Mediterranean, the coasts of northern Africa, the Iberian (Hebrew) peninsula, the British isles (the Cassiterides or *Tin Islands*), large parts of Anatolia, the isles of the Aegean, and even parts of Greece itself, at a time well before their own, for which the historical citations are quite numerous. They also credited the Phoenicians with the spread throughout the Mediterranean of all sorts of crafts and skills, in addition to the use of letters and writing. All of this occurred, more or less, in the centuries just before the Trojan War continuing throughout a “dark age” in Greek history: those centuries which followed the Dorian conquest of Greece from about 1150 B.C., a period of which very little is known. All of the surviving Greek historical writings date from only the 5th century B.C. It is this coinciding period of Israelite occupation of Palestine which we are interested in here, considering the “golden age” of Phoenicia and the spread of a more advanced culture throughout the Mediterranean. For this reason alone, it is of the utmost importance that Biblical scholars properly identify the “Phoenicians”.

Speaking briefly of geography, Phoenicia to the Greeks was more than just the small swath of coast in the northern Levant depicted on many Bible maps today. That demarcation is from later Roman times and closely represents the Roman-era administrative region. For example, Strabo (ca. 63 B.C. - 25 A.D.), an authority on the topic, in his *Geography* described Phoenicia as practically the entire eastern Mediterranean coast, from the northern parts and the coast of modern Syria all the way south to the edges of the Nile river, including even Gaza and the coast of the Sinai (16.2.21, 33). This alone should call into question the description of the Phoenicians as merely Canaanites, for in Biblical times it is clear that both Philistines and Israelites occupied those coasts.

While the Greek Septuagint (LXX) is superior to the Jewish Masoretic Text of the Old Testament in many respects, it is not without errors in translation which affect even this topic. In the LXX, the Hebrew word for *Canaanite* was sometimes errantly translated as *Phoenician*, which reflects the composition of the area and the geographical labeling in use when the LXX was translated from Hebrew, during the Hellenistic period following the conquests of Alexander, but which is not historically accurate in the context of the much earlier Israelite period of occupation in Canaan. After the deportations of the Israelites by the Assyrians and Babylonians in the 8th to 6th centuries B.C., most of the people who remained in the area which became known as Phoenicia were Canaanites, along with others of Israel's ancient enemies. Along with the new peoples brought into the region by its conquerors (i.e. Ezra 4:9-10), these Canaanites, Hittites and others occupied nearly all the land once belonging to Israel (i.e. Ezra 9:2), including the lands of Asher (later “Phoenicia”), Ephraim and Manasseh (later Samaria), and much of Judaea, but not Jerusalem nor most of Galilee. Where “In historical times the Phoenicians called themselves Canaanites and their land Canaan”, as the 9th edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* reads citing surviving fragments of the Greek historian Hecataeus of Miletus, the Biblical student should expect Hecataeus, who wrote in the very late 6th and early 5th centuries B.C., to have found Canaanites in Phoenicia, most of the Israelites having been removed years earlier. The Greeks

continued to call these non-Israelite peoples “Phoenicians”, but only because they dwelt in the land which they called “Phoenicia”. Hence where Mark (7:26) calls a certain woman “Syro-Phoenician”, Matthew (15:22) more accurately identifies that same woman as a Canaanite. Yet the Israelite historical books in the LXX are more reliable than their counterparts in the Masoretic Text (and so the A.V.) in many respects, and as much is realized by comparing them to the writings of Josephus or to their counterparts among the Dead Sea Scrolls.

The preeminent “Phoenician” cities were Tyre and Sidon. Homer, the earliest and most famous of Greek poets, never even mentioned Tyre, but often Sidon (Strabo, 16.2.22). That these cities existed before the Israelite occupation of Canaan is clear in the Biblical record. Byblos, the Gebal of Ezek. 27:9 in the A.V., another famous Phoenician city, also existed in the remotest times, and is mentioned in *The Story of Sinuhe* and other ancient documents (ANET pp. 19 ff., 228 et al.). While Canaanites occupied these cities in antiquity (see for example, the Amarna letters, i.e. ANET p. 484), that does not mean that they did so during the later Israelite Judges and Kingdom periods.

Upon the conquest of the land of Canaan by the Israelites, the entire land was divided amongst the twelve tribes (Josh. 11:23), as described in Joshua chapters 13 through 21. While many of today’s ‘scholars’ deny it (most likely because they haven’t found many Jews in their archaeological diggings), the Biblical record shows with certainty that the various Israelite tribes did for some time occupy the lands which they were given, even if from that time forward they were often identified by geographical location, the district or town which they inhabited, more often than by the name of their tribe (hence Ruth the “Moabite”, David the “Ephrathite”, Jephthah the “Gileadite” et al.). Strabo, speaking of Moses and the Israelite conquest of Canaan (and the terms which he uses are later geographic labels), says that under Moses’ successors the Israelites “seized the property of others and subdued much of Syria and Phoenicia” (16.2.37), exactly as they were commanded to do (i.e. Deut. 11:8, 23-24), even if Strabo thought meanly of it – obviously not understanding the circumstances (like most ‘scholars’ of today).

Yet not all of each Israelite tribe remained in the lands given them, and neither were they truly expected to (i.e. 2 Sam 7:10). For instance, Zebulun was prophesied to “dwell on the coast, and he *shall be* by a haven of ships, and shall extend to Sidon” (Gen. 49:13, LXX). While the territory in Israel proper allotted to Zebulun does not border Sidon, nor any sea (Josh. 19:10-16), Isa. 9:1 surely indicates that Zebulun indeed fulfilled this prophecy (for which see my earlier essay on this topic, *Galilee of the Gentiles?*). Dan is also found at sea, as the prophetess Deborah tells us at Judges 5:17, where she also said that Asher dwells on the seashore and inlets of the coast. Asher’s territory included both Tyre and Sidon (Josh. 19:24-31), the core territory of historical “Phoenicia” on any map. Why do even Bible students doubt that the Asherites inhabited their own lands?

Joshua 11:8; 13:4, 6 and 19:28-29 all make it clear that the children of Israel were very active in, and inhabited, the land of “Phoenicia” encompassing Tyre and points north, and Judges chapters 1 and 3 show that the Israelites at this early period were dwelling among Canaanites whom they failed to remove from the land, enslaving them instead. Tyre is not mentioned among the list of cities in Judges 1 where

Canaanites were said to have remained. Tyre, which soon after became the foremost “Phoenician” city, and the city out of which came the Phoenician colonies of the west, was indeed an Israelite city during this period. Strabo says: “Now although the poets have referred more repeatedly to Sidon than to Tyre (Homer does not even mention Tyre), yet the colonies sent into Lybia [i.e. Carthage] and Iberia, as far even as outside the Pillars, hymn rather the praises of Tyre” (16.2.22).

Actually there were two cities called Tyre, the older mainland city (Ushu in Assyrian records), and the island city a short distance off the coast. In the A.V. Josh. 19:29 says “the strong city Tyre” (where the LXX has only “and the Tyrians”) is a part of Asher’s territory. The LXX, speaking of the inheritance of Naphtali, also gives to that tribe at Josh. 19:35: “... the walled cities of the Tyrians” along with Tyre itself. While the land of Naphtali was not near the coast, these cities were listed among Naphtali’s inheritance. Since there were two cities named Tyre, palaeo-Tyre and the island city not distinguished in the Bible, there may not be a conflict here. Isaiah 9:1 indicates that along with Zebulun, Naphtali was also a sea-going tribe. (“Galilee” in this verse should rather have been translated “the region”, comparing Strong’s #’s 1551 and 1552 and noting that the words are identical in palaeo-Hebrew, the vowel points being an invention of the later Masoretes.) It may well be that Naphtali inherited, or took for themselves, the island Tyre, which is technically outside of Israel proper, by which reason it may also be that Tyre had its own king, who later controlled parts of the mainland (cf. 1 Kings 9:10-14). Discussing Hiram the artificer, who was from Tyre (cf. 1 Kings 7:13 ff.), Josephus the historian states that “he was by birth of the tribe of Naphtali, on the mother’s side (for she was of that tribe); but his father was Ur, of the stock of the Israelites”, whose tribe was evidently not known to the historian (*Antiq.* 8.3.4), yet here it is seen that there were people of Naphtali in Tyre. Later kings of Tyre also ruled Sidon (*Antiq.* 8.13.1), surely helping to fulfill Gen. 49:13.

As time progressed, the Israelites strengthened in their possession of the land of Canaan, as the Biblical records suggest, and Canaanites remained their slaves (cf. *Antiq.* 8.6.3). When David had his census of Israel, Tyre and Sidon were among the places where it was conducted, and here both of these cities are distinguished from “the cities of the Hivites, and of the Canaanites”, and so they must have been Israelite cities (2 Sam 24:6-7), which Yahshua Christ also attests at Matt. 11:21-22 & Luke 10:13-14. The lamentation of Tyre by Ezekiel (ch. 27) shows that it was an Israelite city. At 27:6 we see the tribe of Asher (“Ashurites”, #843) in Cyprus (“Chittim”), an island of famous Phoenician colonies which was subject to Tyre before the Assyrian conquest (*Antiq.* 9.14.2). At 27:12 we see that the tribes of Dan (Danaan Greeks) and Javan (Japhethite Ionian Greeks) brought trade to Tyre. The LXX adds a line to 27:18 not found in the A.V.: “... and wool from Miletus; and they brought wine into thy market”. Miletus was an ancient Carian-Phoenician settlement in southwest Anatolia. Thales of Miletus, an early famous “Greek” philosopher, was said to be “of Phoenician descent” (Herodotus 1:170).

Concerning the prophecies which forecast the destruction of Israel and the Assyrian deportations, we find two mentions of Tyre which are wanting in the A.V. At Amos 3:11 where the A.V. states “An adversary there shall be even round about the land” the LXX has a less ambiguous “O Tyre, thy land shall be made desolate round about thee”, the rest of the verse agreeing except that the LXX has “countries” where

the A.V. has “palaces”. Micah 7:12 in the LXX reads: “And thy cities shall be leveled, and parted among the Assyrians; and thy strong cities shall be parted from Tyre to the river, and from sea to sea, and from mountain to mountain.”

Surely Tyre was an Israelite city, and the historian Josephus acknowledges as much again in his *Against Apion* (1:22), where he quotes a Greek writer Theophrastus and his writings concerning laws: “the laws of the Tyrians forbid men to swear foreign oaths”, and Josephus tells us that he was speaking of Israelites, and then goes on to cite Herodotus (from *Histories* 2:104), who stated that the Phoenicians and the “Syrians of Palestine” (which is what Herodotus called the Judaeans - cf. 2:159, 3:5 and 7:89) were circumcised, and Josephus points out that “there are no inhabitants of Palestine that are circumcised excepting the Judaeans [meaning Israelites]; and therefore it must be his knowledge of them that enabled him to speak so much concerning them”. That the Tyrians had such laws, and brought them to their colonies, is evident in a statement of Strabo’s in his *Geography* at 3.1.6: “The Turdetanians are ranked as the wisest of the Iberians; and they make use of an alphabet, and possess records of their ancient history, poems and laws written in verse that are six thousand years old, as they assert”, and a footnote in the Loeb Library edition states that “Some think the text should be emended to read ‘six thousand verses in length’.” In either case, it is apparent that these Iberians, “Phoenician” Hebrews, surely had copies of the Scriptures.

Many of the Greek gods and heroes were admitted to be Phoenician, including Heracles (who was said to have saved Andromeda from a sea monster at Joppa in Palestine), Dionysus, Cadmus “the Phoenician” (called “the Tyrian” by Herodotus, 2:49), Semele, the Cabiri, Oedipus, Phoenix, and many others. From Phoenix were descended the Greek heroes Minos, Sarpedon, Rhadamanthys, Phineus, Adonis, and his daughter Europa. That Minos was indeed considered to be a Greek see Josephus, *Against Apion* 2:17. Phoenicia is a very important part of many of the earliest Greek myths, along with much of the Greek language. Citing all of this would be impossible here. One may begin with the poems of Homer, Hesiod and Euripides. Wherever such Phoenicians are described by the Greek writers, they were absolutely a White, fair-haired, fair-skinned people. Even the Roman poet Virgil in his *Aeneid* described the Carthaginian queen Dido, a Phoenician, as being blonde and beautiful. While such may not have represented the norm, it certainly was the ideal expressed consistently throughout the poets.

The “Phoenicians” made many settlements in Greece at an early time, nearly as early as the conquest of Canaan itself, namely in Boeotia and Thessaly, in addition to the islands. The largest was named Thebes. Cadmus “the Phoenician” and Danaus “the Egyptian” were even said to have left for Greece from Egypt at the same time that Moses led the Israelites in the Exodus (Diodorus Siculus 40.3.1-3), a myth which certainly holds elements of truth. There is evidence both circumstantial and linguistic (from the Egyptian names for them) that the “Sea Peoples” who invaded Egypt in the late 13th century were actually a group of confederate Israelite and Philistine tribes (for which see [www.crystalinks.com/philistia.html](http://www.crystalinks.com/philistia.html)). The Phoenicians were obviously an important component in early Greek development, even if the Classical Greek writers, whose perspectives were most often Athenian (Ionian), didn’t always admit as much themselves.

Both the 9th and 11th editions of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, in the article “Phoenicia”, explain that the word is properly derived from φοινός (*phoinos*), as any Greek scholar should find plainly evident. Liddell & Scott define φοινός as “*blood-red*”. I must assert that term is therefore a Greek translation of the Hebrew *adam* (Strong’s #’s 119-122), which the Israelites consistently used to describe themselves throughout their own books written during this same period!

The 9th edition of Britannica also states that “... in spite of their purely Semitic language, the Phoenicians were a distinct race from the Hebrews”, and this is only true under the **false** assumptions that the Hebrews were jews, and the Phoenicians were Canaanites. It continues: “... their political organization and colonizing habits ... find no analogies among the Semites”, and the 11th edition notes their “strangely un-Semetic love for the sea”, statements also true only under another **false** assumption: that by “Semites” the jews and arabs are meant, both of whom are actually mixed-race Canaanites. The Biblical and historical records clearly show that the ‘scholars’ are wrong, and that the Phoenicians were **White**, and **Israelites**!