

## Sidon

From International Standard Bible Encyclopedia <sup>1</sup>

**SIDON.** [Heb. *šîḏôn*; Akk. *šidunnu*; Gk. *Sidôn*]; AV also ZIDON. A city-state on the Mediterranean coast, 40 km (25 mi) N of Tyre, the modern city of *Ṣaida'*. The name was explained by the ancients as derived from that of an eponymous hero, founder of the city (Side or Sidon in classical versions of the legend; cf. also Gen. 10:15, where Sidon is the "first-born" of Canaan); but since Justin the name of the city has been recognized as the Phoenician word for "fish." Today it is commonly thought that the etymology is to be sought in the root *šwd*, "to hunt," also "to fish," therefore the toponym signifies "fish market" or something similar; or else the name of the Phoenician deity *Šid* is cited from which the toponym can be derived.

### I. Topography and Archeological Exploration

The city sprang up in a small costal plain near the mouth of the Nahr el-'awali (Bostrenus), in a region long known for luxurious gardens and orchards. The topography is rather complex and scattered; the local inscriptions name various quarters: *Šdn ym* "Sidon by the sea," probably on the site of the modern city; *šmm rmm*, "elevated heavens," or *šmm 'drm*, "powerful heavens," evidently on the hill; *'rš ršp*, "land of Resheph"; *šdn mšl*, *šdn šd*, of uncertain locations; and the mountain sanctuary of *'n ydll*, "source (spring) of Yadlal." Likewise the Assyrian texts distinguished a "Great Sidon" (cf. the identical expression in Josh. 11:8 and 19:28) and a "Little Sidon," besides various villages of the interior and the new city, *Kār-Aššur-aḷ-iddina*, "Fort Esarhaddon," founded by the Assyrians very near that Phoenician city. The archeological recoveries confirm the dispersion not only obviously of the necropoleis (from Phoenician royal tombs of the 5th cent. at *Mağarat 'ablun*, to the various necropoleis of the Bronze Age at

*Kafr Ğarra*, *Lebe'a*, *Quraya*, and of the Roman era), but also of the sanctuaries (the monumental one of *Eshmun* at *Bustān eš-Šaiḷ*, the identification of which with *'n ydll* is demonstrated by the inscriptions of *Ba'al-šillem* that have been recovered) and of the same city. The nucleus of this city was, however, on a promontory which was joined to a line of rocks that assured protection from the wind. South of the promontory a round little bay was located, possibly used as a landingplace but not serving regularly as a seaport in ancient times; the real port was north of the promontory, joined to two internal basins (on the site of the modern port) enclosed by a system of man-made jetties, and a more ample external roadstead.

### II. History

The earliest attestation of Sidon dates from the 15th–14th cents B.C. with the Amarna letters: the king of Sidon, *Zimrida*, was submissive to Egypt (as was the entire region at that time), and was involved in local battles, Sidon being allied with *Arwad* and *Amurru* against *Byblos* and *Tyre*; in particular Sidon was attempting to take from *Tyre* all the mainland possessions as well as a considerable portion of its territories to the south (cf. *AmTab* 147–49). The Akkadian texts from *Ugarit* preserve a pair of names of kings of Sidon (*Yapaḷ-Addu* and *Imtu*) datable to the 13th century. Egyptian texts name the city in *Papyrus Anastasi I* (cf. *ANET*, p. 477) and in the account of *Wen-Amon* (cf. *ANET*, p. 27). Egyptian domination came to an end toward 1200; in the 12th–11th cents Sidon apparently gained a certain political preeminence, which seems necessary to explain the use of the term "Sidonians" to indicate the "Phoenicians" in general. Perhaps passages such as Josh. 13:4–6 and Jgs. 18:7 imply control by Sidon to the southern end of *'Ara S* of the *Carmel* and toward the interior as far as *Laish*. About 1100 the Assyrian *Tiglath-pileser I* mentioned only Sidon (and not *Tyre*) as a Phoenician center S of *Byblos*. But this place of predominance was cut off by the establishment of the kingdom of

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Israel and by the political growth of Tyre toward 1000 B.C.

In the 9th cent. the inscriptions of Ashurnasirpal II and Shalmaneser III concerning expeditions in Syria show that Sidon was an autonomous kingdom alongside of Tyre. On the other hand the situation seems to have been altered by the time of Tiglath-pileser III (747–727) when there was no kingdom of Sidon and the city was certainly included in the territory of Tyre, where Hiram II reigned with the title of “king of the Sidonians” (*Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum* I, 5). The same situation pertained at the time of Sennacherib, who conducted an expedition (701) against Luli king of Sidon, whom Josephus (*Ant. ix.14.2* [283f]) called Elulaios and considered king of Tyre. According to the Assyrian texts, Luli fled from Tyre to Cyprus; Sennacherib replaced the fugitive with the Assyrophile Tubalu (\* Itto-ba‘al) on the throne of Sidon. In 677 the king of Sidon, Abdi-Milkutti, rebelled against the Assyrian Esarhaddon, who intervened, conquered and destroyed Sidon, put Abdi-Milkutti to death, transformed the kingdom of Sidon into an Assyrian province, and founded a new capital (near or on the same site of the destroyed city) with the name of Kār-Aššur-aḥ-iddina (“Fort Esarhaddon”). For the events of 701 or those of 677, one might refer to *Isa. 22:1–4, 12–14* (on the destruction of Sidon, integrated with vv 5–11 and 15–18 relative to Tyre, probably later).

Included thus in the Assyrian empire and then in the Neo-Babylonian, Sidon remained notably central, and then received particular impetus by the works of the Achemenids, who made it the principal Phoenician center of the 5th–4th cents: at Sidon there was a residence of the Persian kings with a park (*Diodorus xvi.41*); the Phoenician fleet, principal nucleus of the Persian, was commanded by the king of Sidon (*Diodorus xiv.67*); the king of Sidon was first in rank of the vassals of Xerxes (*Herodotus viii.67*), and he sailed aboard a Sidonian ship (*Herodotus vii.128*). The funerary inscriptions and monuments recovered at Sidon permit the reconstruction in part of the local dynastic

succession: Eshmunazar (‘šmn ‘zr) I, Tabnit (tbnt), Eshmunazar II, Bodashtart (bd‘štrt) are to be placed at the end of the 6th cent. and in the first half of the 5th. From Tabnit and Eshmunazar II we have the inscriptions on their sarcophagi, from Bodashtart inscriptions of the temple of Eshmun at Bustān eš-Šaiḥ constructed by him (see picture in PHOENICIA). At the same temple of Eshmun a statue was successively dedicated by Prince Ba‘al-shillem (b‘lšlm) recording the names of the father Ba‘ana (b‘n’), of the grandfather Abdemon (‘bd‘mn), and of the great-grandfather Ba‘al-shillem, all kings of Sidon during the the second half of the 5th century. In the 4th cent. reports of classical authors, confirmed in part by numismatic data, give credibility to the sequence of ‘Abd-‘Ashtart I, Bod-‘Ashtart, ‘Abd-‘Ashtart II (Straton the Philhellene, of whom Greek inscriptions [*CIG, I, 87*] recorded close ties and assistance in Attica), Tennes, ‘Abd-‘Ashtart III, ranging between 400 and 332. Crucial moments of this period are the anti-Persian revolt of Straton in 362, the more serious revolt of Tennes in 351, ending with the destruction of Sidon, and finally the submission to Alexander in 332.

In the conflicts between the Seleucids and the Lagides Sidon was annexed to the latter and was made part of the Ptolemaic kingdom from 307 to 197, then of the Seleucid from 197 to 64, when it became part of the Roman province of Syria. In all this period a municipal government and a certain autonomy (*hierá kaí ásylos*) were preserved, at least from 111 when an era of dating was initiated “according to the people of Sidon”; but in 20 B.C. Augustus brought an end to the autonomy of the Phoenician cities, and Sidon progressively declined. Itineraries and travelers of the 4th–6th cents A.D. considered the city a secondary center (less important than Sarepta), but with a local bishop; it had a limited role at the time of the Crusades, as did all the ports of the region, after which its horizons became exclusively local and remain so today.

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