

The Doctrine of the Sidonians—Old Testament

Part One: To the Time of the Judges

1. First, the vocabulary. The Hebrew word for *Sidon* is Tsîydôwn (צִידֹן) [pronounced *tsee-DOHN*], which is transliterated *Sidon* or *Zidon*. It is found in Gen. 10:15, 19 49:13 Joshua 11:8 19:28 Judges 1:31 10:6 18:28 II Sam. 24:6 I Kings 17:9 I Chron. 1:13 Isa. 23:2 4:12 Jer. 25:22 27:3, 47:4 Ezek. 27:8 28:21–22 Joel 3:4 (4:4) Zech. 9:2. Strong's #6721 BDB #851. The adjective gentis is Tsîydônîy (צִידֹנִי) [pronounced *tsee-doh-NEE*], which refers to the inhabitants of Sidon. This is found in Deut. 3:9 Joshua 13:4, 6 Judges 3:3 10:12 18:7 I Kings 5:6 (20) 11:5, 33 16:31 II Kings 23:13 I Chron. 22:6 Ezra 3:7 Ezek. 32:30. Strong's #6722 BDB #851.
2. These people appear to be equivalent to the Phœnicians, which is based upon a Greek word for *purple* (as they were famous for their purple dye), and therefore is not found in the Old Testament.
3. The first mention of Sidon is of the man, who was the son of Canaan—in fact, he was his first-born (Gen. 10:15).
4. The implication of Gen. 10:19 is that Sidon is one of the most ancient cities in the ancient world. It reads: [And the territory of the Canaanite was from Sidon as you go toward Gerar, as far as Gaza; as you go toward Sodom and Gomorrah and Admah and Zeboiim, as far as Lasha](#). This means that the Canaanites occupied much of the Palestinian shore, which territory spread into central Judah prior to the invasion of the Israelites.
5. Jacob made an interesting prophecy concerning Zebulun, in Gen. 49:13: [“Zebulun will live at the seashore; and he will be a haven for ships and his flank will be toward Sidon.”](#) As far as we can tell, Zebulun never occupied any shoreline and it was southeast of Sidon. Unless there is some sort of future fulfillment here, we might have to write off Jacob's prophecy as bogus. The explanation for all of this has been covered in great detail in my exegesis of Gen. 49:13.
6. Tyre and Sidon are both mentioned by Egyptian inscriptions from the 16th century B.C. A king of Sidon is mentioned in the Amarna letters.¹
7. Some people are concerned because the area we are studying is called Leshem in one passage and Laish in another. In Deut. 3:9, we read: [Sidonians call Hermon Sirion, and the Amorites call it Senir](#). In other words, it is possible to have two different names for the same place.
8. During one of the battles of Joshua in northern Palestine, they pursued their enemies all the way to Great Sidon (Joshua 11:8).
9. God, in Joshua 13, gave Joshua a run down on what remained to be captured by Israel; or, rather, what peoples remained unconquered. The Sidonians were among these people (vv. 4–6); however, the placement of the Sidonians and the land where they actually occupied was difficult to understand in that passage. In fact, one of the things which is unclear to me is that the people who occupied Tyre and Sidon were the Phœnicians. I would assume that references to the Sidonians are equivalent to references to the Phœnicians (although I have learned that it is not good to assume much of anything when approach God's Word). In fact, when the groups of people who remained in Israel, unconquered, are named in the book of Judges, we have the Sidonians mentioned (Judges 3:3).
10. Whereas the Philistines occupied the southern shoreline of Palestine, the Sidonians occupied the northern shoreline of Palestine, the chief cities being Tyre and Sidon (roughly 20 miles north of Tyre).
11. The city of Sidon, although not specifically said to be given over to Asher, was on the border of Asher (Joshua 19:28). Sidon was apparently given over to them, as Sidon is named as one of the cities remaining unconquered by Asher in Judges 1:31.
12. The chief cities of the Sidonians were Aradus (Arvad), Byblos, Sidon and Tyre, which dot the northern coast of Palestine. According to ZPEB, each of these cities operated as an independent political unit, although, on occasion, one would have control over neighboring territory. However, they were never unified into one nation or even as a confederacy.
13. The area in which they lived was the thin line of coast, not much more than five miles wide, ranging a distance of 120 miles during its greatest prosperity.
14. From the reading of Judges 18, what we are dealing with here is a group of people who amicably split off from the Sidonians, and who moved out to the country where they could live peacefully and not be at war. The shoreline of Palestine was sometimes unsettled by war, and this group of people apparently left the excitement of all that in order to gain some peace. Therefore, they were living in such a way as to reveal that

¹ See Pritchard; *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*; no. 147, p. 484.

they were originally Sidonians (Judges 18:7). Given that the Sidonians primarily lived along the northern shore of Palestine, they did not extend their protection further inland, leaving the group of Sidonians who lived in the far north of west-central Israel, unprotected, and, therefore, easy prey for the Danites.