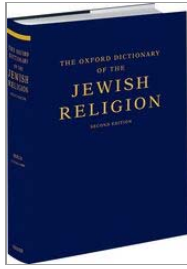


Oxford Reference



The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion (2 ed.)
 Edited by Adele Berlin and Maxine Grossman

Publisher: Oxford University Press	Print Publication Date: 2011
Print ISBN-13: 9780199730049	Published online: 2011
Current Online Version: 2011	eISBN: 9780199759279

PHOENICIANS,

Greek name for the peoples of the Levant (greater Canaan), especially the coastal region, and used by scholars today to refer to the Canaanites of such major city-states as Byblos, Tyre, and Sidon from c. 1200 BCE onward. The Bible portrays the Phoenicians as being on friendly political terms with the Israelites. For example, King Hiram I of Tyre (c.980 BCE) made a treaty with David and Solomon, and the Phoenicians supplied the architects, workmen, and raw materials (cedar of Lebanon, especially) for the construction of David's and Solomon's palaces and for the Temple in Jerusalem (2 Sm. 5.11; 1 Kgs. 5.15–32, 7.13–14). The detailed biblical description of the Temple dovetails with the data from the archeological discovery of various Phoenician temples, clearly demonstrating that Solomon's Temple was built according to the design of a Phoenician-Canaanite prototype. Solomon and Hiram also had joint maritime ventures from the Red Sea port of Ezion-geber (near Elat) to develop trade with regions to the far south and east (perhaps East Africa and India; 1 Kgs. 9.26–28, 10.11, 10.22). Later, King Ethbaal I of Sidon (c.880 BCE) appears to have entered into a treaty with Omri, marked by the marriage of their children, Ahab, later king of Israel, and Jezebel, the Phoenician princess (1 Kgs. 16.31). These alliances, especially the latter, resulted in the introduction of Phoenician worship, especially the cult of Baal (see BAAL WORSHIP), into Israelite circles (1 Kgs. 16.31–32) and the subsequent confrontation of Elijah with the Baal worshipers to preserve the purity of the Israelite religion. The Phoenicians were well known for their extensive trade with and colonization of the entire Mediterranean basin. They developed the linear alphabet, which then was taken over by the Israelites and many others in the Near East. Similarly, the Greeks (and through them all other Europeans) borrowed the use of alphabetic writing from the Phoenicians.

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