



Roi Hiram De Tyre King Hiram of Tyre

Hiram followed his father (Abi Baal) as king of Tyre. He himself was followed by his son (Baal-User), who ruled for 17 years, and his grandson (Abdastratus), who ruled for 9 more till he was murdered in a conspiracy. This was tied for the longest that a single family ruled as kings of Tyre, of course we only know of the 17 kings that ruled from the time of Hiram's father till it came to be ruled by judges.

Originally, Tyre was populated on the mainland, with the island of Tyre just offshore and a much smaller island between the mainland and the larger island. The city was just a minor community and, in fact, had to be founded and re-founded by Sidon. The city which he came to rule included an island population at the time, but there were no records of it anywhere in surviving official documents - only the mention of it on some Sidonian coins. The Assyrian, Tiglatpileser I (1114-1076), received tribute from all the major Phoenician cities, including Sidon, Gubal, and Arvad, but no mention is made of Tyre. In trade-relations with Egypt (1075 - 1060), Byblos was the most important, followed by Sidon. Tyre is relegated to a secondary status. The island population, while small, had to rely on shipments of water from Ushu (Paleotyre, or modern day Tell er-Rachidiyeh) and food from any of the mainland communities.

When Hiram I came to power (969-936), he brought massive changes. He had cisterns and other engineering works built to catch and save rainwater (the first known in history). He joined the two islands together with landfill from the mainland (bringing it to about 40 acres) and used some of the soil to enclose, on three sides, the harbor on the north side of the island (and added mighty shipyards). He not only built the royal palace, but great temples to Melkart and Astarte, which were world famous hundreds of years later, when Herodotus wrote of them, and when Alexander wanted to worship in that of Melkart. The building of the Eurychoros ("Broad Place") is, by tradition, credited to Hiram. This was the main marketplace near the northern harbor. He put a great deal of diplomatic efforts into his relations with Palestine (making his city the main trading partner for Palestine).

Hiram came to power in a little town and created from it the most important port in the Mediterranean. According to H. J. Katzenstein in *The History of Tyre* (1973), "It was Hiram who laid the foundations for the great Tyrian Sea Empire that knew no equal in ancient history." The 'Golden Age' of Phoenicia/Tyre began during his reign, but it wasn't all his doing. Tyre was aided by the waning power of Egypt, by the defeat of the Philistines in 975 by David, and by the unification of Israel. Israel was a state friendly to Tyre (Hiram's diplomatic skills may have had to do with this), and one which had few ships, a large market of customers for Tyre's trade, and access to land trade routes with Mesopotamia.

TYRIAN TRADE

Hiram focused his commercial efforts on the continent of Asia. This not only required the land routes to Asia (through Israel), but a strong presence in the Mediterranean. He produced the strongest commercial/military fleet in the sea. Hiram called himself "King of Tyre and of Phoenicia" but, though it may have been true financially, the actual political reality didn't happen till his son was on the throne.

One of the first efforts he made for Asian trade is the famous commercial treaty signed by him and Solomon. In this document, they agreed to engage in large-scale commercial transactions. Hiram provided advanced technology, building material (cedar and cypress wood to both David and Solomon), specialist technical assistance (architects & craftsmen), services and luxury goods in exchange for Solomon's silver, farm products, and "food for the royal household" (20,000 cors each of wheat and barley and 20,000 baths of olive oil per year). The agricultural products sent to Tyre were received on an annual basis over a period of twenty years. Hiram's craftsmen designed and built the temple of Jerusalem and the Palace of Solomon. Among the furnishings these craftsmen built were two bronze pillars (18 cubits high and 12 cubits in circumference with finely worked bronze capitols on each, rising another 5 cubits), 10 decorated bronze stands (each 4 cubits long, 4 cubits wide, and 3 cubits high) on wheels with bronze axles and each holding a decorated bronze basin (holding 40 baths each), a 'sea' (large reservoir of water) measuring 10 cubits across and 5 cubits high holding 2,000 baths) as well as the 12 bulls it rested on, and bronze pots, shovels, and sprinkling bowls which were too numerous to count. Israel also paid 120 talents of gold to Tyre and turned over "twenty cities" in the lands of Galilee as a guarantee of the agreements. Solomon needed more wood and gold-work than he expected. The 20 cities were turned over to him as a surety that the debt would be paid. When it was paid, the cities were returned to Solomon. Tyre, therefore, was given a strong presence in the 'land of Cabul' (part of the rich wheat and olive oil producing plain of Asdralon). According to Aubet, archeological evidence has proven there to have been Tyrian enclaves in Akhziv, Akko, Tell Keisan and Tell Abu Hawam. Although not mentioned in the agreement, Solomon was receiving horses and carriages from way up in Cappadocia and Cilicia. These had to have come by Phoenician ships, probably Tyrian ones.

To quote from Maria Eugenia Aubet in *The Phoenicians and the West*, "The second stage in Hiram's expansionist policy coincides with the organization of a joint naval enterprise with Israel aimed at opening up a new market: the Orient. The biblical texts describe how, on the initiative of Tyre, Solomon and Hiram built a merchant fleet at Ezion-geber, near Elath on the Red Sea (I Kings 9:26). Their ships, manned by Phoenicians, were the 'Ships of Tarshish' (I Kings 10:22 and 49), which sailed every three years to a distant country, Ophir, and brought back gold, silver, ivory and precious stones [the Bible also mentions apes and baboons (I Kings 10:22)]. The destination of these voyages is generally located on the west coast of the Red Sea (Sudan or Somalia), in Arabia or even in the Indian Ocean. What is certain is that the Old Testament invariably refers to the east, which is why the hypothesis that the destination of these voyages might have been the south of the Iberian peninsula has been definitely discarded nowadays....."

The Phoenicio-Israelite incursions into the Red Sea are above all a demonstration of the fact that, during the tenth century, Tyre was already capable of organizing long-distance maritime expeditions.

Through the biblical texts and those of Flavius Josephus [*Jewish Antiquities*, Josephus V trans by H. St. J. Thackeray & Ralph Marcus as well as *Against Apion*, Josephus I trans by Thackeray also], we know that Hiram and Solomon made considerable profits from their naval expeditions, profits which they spent on embellishing their respective capitols, in a desire to express their political power."

Except for Ugarit in the 14th and 13th centuries, metals didn't seem to be circulated in large amounts in western Asia before Hiram's time. Neither Assyria, Israel, nor the Aramaic kingdoms had either the

organization or the ships to carry it. Tyre became the premier supplier of metals to the area (starting in Hiram's reign). Carchemish and Damascus also sold metal to Mesopotamia. There was a Phoenician copper refinery in Ezion-geber. They bought gold cheaply in Egypt to sell for a profit in the Hittite Empire. Aside from the already existing metal sources for Tyre (Cyprus, Egypt, Sinai, Ezion-geber & Asia Minor), further metal sources were discovered - if not under Hiram, then under one of the next couple of rulers. Etruria and nearby Elba had tin, copper, and iron. Spain had silver, gold, and tin. The products Mesopotamia usually bought from Tyre were textiles, perfumes, copper, and iron.

After Hiram, trade became a bit more privatized. Under him, it was entirely run by the government. His palace managed all international exchanges for Tyre. The food sent by Solomon, therefore, went directly into the possession of the palace. From here, it was distributed to the people of the city. For this reason, when you read of "food for the royal household" concerning the deal with David and Solomon, you should actually understand that they were providing food to the city. In Israel, as in Tyre, after the reign of Solomon, privatized trade began to make inroads into the market.

HIRAM AND THE TEMPLES

In about the tenth century, most of the Phoenician cities threw out their old pantheons, and set up a pair of deities. In Tyre it was Melkart (male) and Astarte (female), in Byblos it was Baalat Gebal (female) and Baal Shamem (male), and in Sidon it was Astarte (female) and Eshmun (male). Melkart (who became Herakles or Hercules to the Greeks) seems to have no antecedents in the previous millennium. According to Menander of Ephesus, the consecration or 'invention' of Melkart is accredited to Hiram. Herodotus says Melkart and Tyre both arose at the same time, but that would put his birth at about 2300 - a time when Tyre worshiped completely different gods. Melkart means 'king of the city' (melek-qart or mlk-qrt), and the city had deified Hiram, so King Hiram may actually have become Hercules (Melkart). Each of the next few successive kings was also deified, however. Whether Hiram became Melkart, invented him, or just raised an already existing Melkart (of whom no previous evidence remains) to 'god of the city', it was still to the Melkart temple Hiram built, that Alexander came to worship his ancestor (Hercules) before he destroyed the city. And it was probably this temple to which Herodotus visited and described with the words, *I visited the temple and found that the offerings which adorned it were numerous and valuable, not the least remarkable being two pillars, one of pure gold, the other of emerald which gleamed in the dark with a strange radiance.* According to *The Heritage of Tyre* (ed. Martha Sharp Joukowsky), "To further embellish the city, the king set up a golden column in the temple of Zeus, which is referred to in Josephus, *Antiquities* 8.147 and *Against Apion* 1.113, and had the great cedar trees felled and brought down from the mountains of Lebanon to replace the ancient temples with new ones to honor the city's patron gods, Heracles and Astarte." Although I'll admit to a bit of confusion as to whether the city had two temples with columns of gold, I suspect Hiram may have built a smaller temple to Zeus (or some equivalent Phoenician name) with a subsequently smaller golden column. It amuses me to think of the Hercules of legend and television as actually being at least created by King Hiram, if not actually having been him.

In *The Heritage of Tyre*, mention is made of a "so-called Tomb of Hiram" near Hanawayh, but it isn't said whether it is referred to thusly because it is fake, or just uncertain.