



Good day Worthy Knights,

In this part 86, the Cedars of Lebanon.

Wikipedia



“Adonhiram was also the Name of King Solomon's Intendant of Works on Mount Lebanon.”

The famous Lebanese cedar tree was widely used in the construction of ancient temples, palaces, and seagoing vessels, including Solomon's Temple. But what exactly made its timbers so important for ancient woodworking?

In the Biblical world, Lebanese cedar (*Cedrus libani*) trees were highly sought after as an excellent source of timber for ancient woodworking. The wood's high quality, pleasant scent and resistance to both rot and insects made it a popular building material for temples, palaces and seagoing vessels, from Solomon's famed Temple to the so-called “Jesus Boat” of the first century C.E. Today, Lebanese cedar trees grow mostly in Lebanon and southern Turkey, with a few found in Cyprus and Syria. As the Bible makes clear, the valuable wood had to be imported into ancient Israel.

The Phoenician king Hiram of Tyre sent Lebanese cedar, carpenters, and masons to Jerusalem to build a palace for King David (2 Samuel 5:11). Likewise, Hiram provided cedars and artisans to King Solomon for the construction of his own palace as well as the Temple in Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 2:3,7; 1 Kings 5:20). The Bible also informs us that Lebanese cedar timbers were commonly transported by sea. The Book of Ezra reports that timbers were hauled to the Phoenician coast and then sailed to Jaffa for transport to Jerusalem (Ezra 3:7).

Lebanese cedar wood was also popular for ancient woodworking and ship construction because it is easily worked and shaped, it seasons with minimal shrinkage or distortion and it resists decay in salt water better than most types of wood. In the ancient shipwreck off the Uluburun promontory of Turkey, nearly all the boards of the hull were made of Lebanese cedar.

The following are comments from the Biblical Archaeology Society Staff:

The current issue of Biblical Archaeology Society (p.53), states that the early "written evidence of the export of cedar into Egypt appears in the records of Pharaoh Snefru (c.2600 B.C.E.). There he acknowledges the arrival of 40 ships filled with cedar wood. He boasts of using it in a ship 1,700 feet (510 m) long, as well as for the doors of a palace."

Snefru, whose name means "to make beautiful", was the founder of the 4th dynasty known for its pyramids. These elaborate monuments to the cult of the dead king required an enormous amount of labour.

In the Torah, Cedar wood is also used in purity ritual alongside hyssop (ezov / za'atar), like in the burning of the Red Heifer to produce the purifying ashes. A similar combination (cedar and sage burnt in purification ritual) is found in Navajo tradition.

(Daniel - May 21, 2013 at 10:29 am)

Why did Solomon import timber all the way from Lebanon for the construction of the temple in Jerusalem?

The account at 1 Kings 5:1-10 describes an agreement made between Solomon and Hiram, king of Tyre. According to that agreement, rafts of cedar and juniper logs were to be brought to Israel by sea from Lebanon and used in the construction of the temple.

Cedar was an important trade item in the ancient Middle East. In Egypt and Mesopotamia, this timber was extensively used for the beams and panelling of temples and palaces. Royal archives, literary texts, and inscriptions attest to the continual importation of cedar to various southern Mesopotamian city-states, sometimes as booty or tribute. In Egypt it was used in the construction of royal barges, coffins, and other funerary items.

The cedars of Lebanon were particularly renowned for the durability, beauty, and sweet fragrance of their wood, not to mention their resistance to attack by insects. Thus, Solomon was using the best of materials for the temple. Today, all that remains of the forests of cedars that once covered the Lebanese mountains are a few small, isolated groves.

(Kurt - May 21, 2013 at 10:29 am)



National Flag of Lebanon