

called Syria (or the northern portion of the United Arab Republic). These two sections have developed rather differently, though there have been many interrelations between them. Three great cities of the Lebanon region, Tyre, Sidon, and Byblos, have been important in various ways in Biblical history. Tyre and Sidon have often been united, with one or other of them assuming the leadership.

Lebanon and, to some extent, Syria, had the advantage of receiving papyrus from Egypt in trade, which made it much easier for them to make records than for the people of Mesopotamia, but at the same time caused these records to disintegrate within a few decades. Very little cuneiform has been found in this region from the time of the Divided Kingdom, though many cuneiform tablets have been found from an earlier period. The annals of the Assyrian kings contain many references to events and personages in Syria, particularly in the Damascus area, and these are important for the study of special corroboration. A few Aramaic inscriptions have been found on monuments in the region of Syria. One of these corroborates the name of the king of Damascus mentioned in 1 Kings 15.18, and in addition gives evidence of the proselyting activities of the Sidonians for their god Melkart, who was called Baal (or Master) in 1 Kings 16.31 and the following chapters. The proselyting done by the priests of Baal in Israel at about this time made necessary the work of Elijah and Elisha. So this is a most interesting general corroboration of these activities.

Perhaps the most interesting discovery from this region was the finding of the Ras Shamra inscriptions. In 1929 French excavators began to excavate the promontory of Ras Shamra on the northern portion of the Lebanon coast. Impressive buildings came to light with some very interesting paintings, a certain number of tablets written in Akkadian cuneiform, and a large group of tablets in an entirely new type of writing, with signs that looked like cuneiform, but could not be read