

places, while even the fields are very stony. Along the coast olives, tobacco, and oranges are grown and exported, the last-mentioned notably from Jaffa ; while silk is produced on the slopes of the Lebanon range, and wheat is cultivated in the interior. The chief occupations are, however, pastoral.

On account of the plateau and mountains, communication between the coast and interior is difficult ; but there is a railway from Jaffa to Jerusalem, and another from the port of Beirut to Damascus. Damascus stands at the western edge of the desert, in an oasis watered by the Abana or Barada, the valley of which defines a convenient route eastwards across Anti-Lebanon. To reach Beirut by this route it is necessary to cross the Lebanon Mountains ; but the ancient city of Sidon could be reached by going south of these mountains, while the route from Damascus to Tyre lay south of both Mount Hermon and Mount Lebanon.

In early historic times, when the Assyrians and Babylonians who inhabited Mesopotamia were, like the Egyptians, very highly civilized, there was a good deal of trade carried on between them and the Egyptians along these routes, and then by sea ; for the breadth of the desert in the south hindered direct communication by land. The Phœnicians, who then dwelt along the seaboard in the north, were thus able to profit by their intermediate position, and, having plenty of timber on the slopes of Lebanon with which to build boats, became a great maritime nation, and acquired a prosperity which only declined with the decay of the States between which they dwelt.

The narrowness of the seaboard in Phœnicia, and the isolation of the fertile areas owing to the spurs of the mountain ranges behind, which jut out into the sea in places, fostered the rise of separate city communities, and also favoured the emigration of the increasing surplus population. The two most noted Phœnician cities were Tyre and Sidon, the former being situated on a small island that has since become joined to the mainland by marine deposits, and the latter on a promontory. Both could be easily defended, and possessed good harbours for those times. In the selection of the sites of their colonies the Phœnicians kept in mind the importance of natural advantages. One of their most famous settlements was at Carthage, which had a good hinterland, and was situated on a little peninsula on the North African coast, so that it possessed a double harbour. Fishing was an important industry with the Phœnicians, and two kinds of shellfish which they obtained yielded a beautiful purple