

only 22 letters based on sound, as opposed to the myriad of symbols in cuneiform and hieroglyphics prevalent at the time. The word *phonic* and *phonetic* have the same root as the word *Phoenicia*.

The word **Bible**, which means "the book," is derived from the city of Byblos, which was a trading source for papyrus, the writing material for early books. The legend of the *Phoenix*, the bird consumed by fire only to regenerate, is based upon the Phoenician people, whose land was occupied and towns destroyed many times by warlike peoples, only to regenerate time and again. In fact, the Greeks were the ones that named the seafarers the Phoenicians, or *phoinikes*, the singular of which is *phoinix*. The Romans spelled it *phoenix*! Phoenicia gives all the people of Lebanon a unique heritage to their country.

Jesus Christ commissioned His Apostles to be His witnesses to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). St. Paul stayed a week in Tyre after his return from his third missionary journey (Acts 21:2-3), and also stopped in Sidon on his fourth missionary trip to Rome (Acts 27:3). The land was still known as Phoenicia at the time Jesus Christ lived.

Lebanon is the crossroads of the East and West. The Lebanese people are noted for their adaptability and hospitality. The population is both Christian and Muslim. Arabic, French, and English newspapers flourish in Beirut, as many Lebanese speak all three languages. The Lebanese people have migrated all over the world, reflecting their Phoenician heritage. The intellectual ties to the West are reflected in the presence of two major universities, the American University of Beirut, founded in 1866, and L'Université Saint Joseph, founded in 1870. Lebanon is the birthplace of Kahlil Gibran, the author of *The Prophet*, a book of poetry that has sold nearly ten million copies in twenty languages worldwide. The country is unique, for one can go skiing in the mountains in the morning, and swimming in the Mediterranean in the afternoon. All share in traditional Lebanese cuisine, which represents the classic Mediterranean diet. Famous for their health benefits, Lebanese prepared dishes such as grape leaves, kibbeh, tabooli, hummus, falafel, baba ghanouj, and baklawa which are enjoyed the world over!

March 25, the Feast of the Annunciation of Our Lady, has become a National Holiday in Lebanon, as the Virgin Mary, who is revered by Christians and Muslims alike, provides unity among Lebanese of every faith.

\*(excerpted from: [www.maryourmother.net](http://www.maryourmother.net))

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## *Our Lady of Lebanon*



*"The just man shall flourish like a palm tree,  
like a Cedar of Lebanon shall he grow."  
Psalm 92:12*

*Our Lady of Lebanon,  
please pray for peace, peace in our hearts, peace in our family,  
peace in our land, and peace throughout the world.  
Amen.*

## Our Lady of Lebanon

\*Lebanon is a land of exceptional beauty and history. Situated on the east coast of the Mediterranean Sea, the Lebanon mountain range rises majestically from the sea to snow-capped mountain peaks that reach over 10,000 feet. Nestled in the mountains in the north are the famous Cedars of Lebanon, often referred to in the Bible, such as in the Books of Kings, Psalms, Song of Songs, and the Prophet Isaiah. Jesus and Mary visited Lebanon during His public ministry.

Lebanon has a special devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and she has become known there as Our Lady of Lebanon. For, while she was living, she visited there with her Son! There is a sanctuary in the south of Lebanon dedicated to the Virgin of Mantara, a place where Mary stayed awaiting her Son, when Jesus went to Tyre and Sidon. The Basilica of Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Catholic Church is located in Harissa, a small town about thirty minutes north of Beirut, the capital city. The Blessed Virgin Mary was named the Queen of Lebanon by the Maronite Patriarch in 1908 upon completion of the Basilica. The Shrine was visited by Pope John Paul II in May of 1997 in his effort to support Eastern Catholicism and to evangelize the youth. Located between Jounieh on the coast and Bkerke, Harissa is surrounded by numerous churches and monasteries.

*Jesus got up and went away from there to the region of Tyre. And when He had entered a house, He wanted no one to know of it; yet He could not escape notice. But after hearing of Him, a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately came and fell at His feet. And she kept asking Him to cast the demon out of her daughter. Now the woman was a Gentile, of the Syrophenician race. Mark 7:24-26*

Jesus Christ was the first to evangelize the Gentiles when He visited Tyre and performed a miracle for the Syro-Phoenician woman's daughter, as noted in (Matthew 15:21-28) and (Mark 7:24-30). He then went by way of Sidon on to the Sea of Galilee (Mark 7:31). The Gospel of (John 2:1-12) describes Jesus performing His first miracle, when He turned water into wine at the request of His mother Mary at the wedding feast of Cana in Galilee. The Cana southwest of Tyre in Lebanon today was located in the region of Galilee at the time of Jesus. The church historian Eusebius of Caesarea in 339 wrote that Cana of Galilee is the Cana south of Sidon. No one can say for sure in which of the towns named Cana the miracle of the wedding feast took place. But the fact that Jesus went **down** to Capernaum (John 2:12) suggests the wedding at Cana took place in Cana of Lebanon for Cana of Palestine is south of Capernaum, and Jesus would have had to go **up** to Capernaum were

it Cana of Palestine! There is a grotto in Qana, Lebanon with large stone water jars as well as a sculpture symbolic of Jesus and the Twelve Apostles.

The Eastern Catholic Maronite Church of Lebanon originated from St. Maron, a monk in the fourth century who left Antioch for the Orontes River to lead an ascetic life. He soon had many followers that adopted his monastic life. Following the death of St. Maron in 410, his disciples built a monastery in his memory and formed the nucleus of the Maronite Church. The martyrdom of 350 monks, for remaining true to Rome and the Council of Chalcedon (451), led the Maronites to seek refuge in the mountains of Lebanon. The Crusader Raymond of Toulouse discovered the Maronites near the Cedars of Lebanon on his way to Jerusalem in 1099. The Maronites, because of their monastic origin, have been able to withstand intense pressure and persecution to preserve their Church and maintain the Christian culture of Lebanon - right to the present day. The Patriarch of the Maronite Church resides in Bkerke, near Harissa, leading his worldwide flock of over three million faithful, in countries such as Lebanon, Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Mexico and the United States. The Maronite liturgy still celebrates the Mass in Aramaic, the language of Jesus.

Phoenicia is the name given to those city-states that grew on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea and were identified as centers of trade in ancient times. Families began to inhabit the land around Byblos about 6000 BC. The Phoenicians were a peaceful, seafaring people expert in navigation and trade and beginning around 3200 BC, were the first to explore the Mediterranean Sea in boats made of cedar. Protected by the mountains of Lebanon from warring nations, they were able to differentiate from their Canaanite neighbors and form a distinct culture and society. Byblos, Tyre (2750 BC), and Sidon became main centers of commerce. In the ninth century BC, the Phoenician language extended as far north as Cilicia in Asia Minor. Between the ninth and sixth centuries BC, the naval proficiency of the Phoenicians established the first trading system to encompass the entire Mediterranean from their homeland, in what is now Lebanon, to colonies in Cyprus, Carthage, Sicily, Sardinia, and through the Straits of Gibraltar to Cadiz on the Atlantic coast of Spain and Lixus on the Atlantic coast of Morocco.

The Phoenicians developed the alphabet around 1400 BC in order to communicate with the diverse cultures and tongues of their trading partners. It was the Phoenician alphabet that was widely received throughout Greece and the Mediterranean world, as it was