

64 Ashdod

Names (also known as)

Arabic – Isdud
Hellenistic name: Azotus

Etymology

Ashdod means “ravager” from “to be burly, powerful”.

Location/Description



Ashdod is the 5th largest city in Israel, located in the Southern District of the country, on the Mediterranean coast, located 32 km (20 miles) south of Tel Aviv, 20 km (12 miles) north of Ashkelon and 53 km (33 miles) west of Jerusalem.

Ashdod’s port is Israel’s largest and accounts for 60% of the countries imported goods.

Scriptural references

Old Testament

Josh. 11:22; 15:46,47; 1 Sam. 5:1,3,5,6,7; 6:17, 2 Chron. 26:6; Neh. 4:7; 13:23,24; Isa.

20:1; Jer. 25:20; Amos 1:8; 3:9, Zeph. 2:4; Zech. 9:6.

New Testament

Acts 8:40

Famous characters

Philistines
Dagon
Tartan
Alexander the Great
Philip (Acts 8)



Brief history

The first documented settlements in Ashdod date to the Canaanite culture of the 17th Century BC (one of the oldest cities in the world).

The Philistines, Israelites, Byzantines, Crusaders and Arabs settled it. Ashdod was one of the key 5 cities of the Philistines (Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron, Gath, Gaza) - 1 Sam. 6:17.

When Israel entered the land, Ashdod was given to the tribe of Judah by Joshua (Josh. 15:46).

It was to Ashdod that the Philistines had taken the Ark of God and ascribed their victory over Israel to their god Dagon (Dagon means “fish-form” from dag, a fish - also the male god of fertility). God brought a plague upon the Philistines for what they had done and smote them with a plague (field mice). In addition they suffered from an epidemic – probably a malignant skin disease.

In 950 BC Ashdod was destroyed during Pharaoh Siamun's conquest of the region. The city was not rebuilt until at least 815 BC. Around 715 BC, it was conquered by Sargon II, who destroyed the city and exiled its residents, including some Jews who were subsequently settled in Media and Elam.

Asdûdu led the revolt of Philistines, Judeans, Edomites, and Moabites against Assyria after expulsion of king Akhimehi, whom Sargon had

installed instead of his brother Azuri. Gath (Gimtu) belonged to the kingdom of Ashdod at that time.

An Assyrian general Tartan gained control of Ashdod in 711, and forced the "usurper" Yamani to flee (Isa. 20:1). Mitinti was king at the time of Sennacherib, and Akhimilki in the reign of Esarhaddon. Psamtik I of Egypt is reported to have besieged the great city Azotus for twenty-nine years (Herodotus, ii. 157); the Biblical references to the remnant of Ashdod (Jer. 25:20; cp. Zeph. 2:4) are interpreted as allusions to this event.

The city absorbed another blow in 605 BC, when Nebuchadnezzar conquered it. In 539 BC the city was rebuilt by the Persians, but was conquered in the wars of Alexander of Macedon.

In the Book of Nehemiah, the Ashdodites seem to represent the whole nation of the Philistines in the sixth century BC, the speech of Ashdod (which the younger generation of the Jews are described as adopting) would simply be the general Philistine dialect (Neh. 13:23).

The city prospered as Azotus (Ἀζωτος) under the Hellenistic rule, until the Hasmonean Revolt. During the rebellion Judas Maccabeus arrived at its gates, but did not conquer it. He left it for his brother Jonathan, who conquered it in 147 BCE and destroyed the Temple of Dagon. According to Josephus (Antiquities of the Jews 13:15, volume 4), Alexander Jannæus possessed it. Pompey restored its independence by reconstructing its city walls, though it belonged to the dominion of Herod and Salome (Antiquities... 17:18, volume 9), and Vespasian had to later take it by force. Despite its location four miles (6 km) from the coast, both Ptolemy and Josephus described it as a maritime city. This curious description may refer to Ashdod's control of a separate shore-edge harbor, called Azotus Paraliyus, or Ashdod-Sea (Antiquities... 13:15, volume 4). The city's prominence continued until the 7th century, when a citadel was built in Azotus Paraliyus as a stronghold against the Byzantine navy. To the west of the wooded height on which the city stands, traces of the ancient harbor Kal'at Al Mina can still be seen.

Modern Ashdod was established in 1956 on the sand hills near the ancient town. Today the population is 240,000 people.

Over 95% of Ashdod's population is Jewish (30% religious).

Sources:

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(Compiler- Ian Macfarlane).

