

Ezekiel 27:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Tarshish was thy merchant by reason of the multitude of all kind of riches; with silver, iron, tin, and lead, they traded in thy fairs.

Analysis

Tarshish was thy merchant by reason of the multitude of all kind of riches (מֶרֶב כָּל-הוֹן, merov kol-hon)—Tarshish (likely Tartessos in southern Spain, the ancient world's western extremity) traded hon ("wealth/riches"), emphasizing abundance. **With silver, iron, tin, and lead, they traded in thy fairs** (בְּכֶסֶף בַּרְזֵל בְּדִיל וְעוֹפֶרֶת, bekhesef barzel bedil ve'oferet)—four metals representing the complete spectrum from precious (silver) to base (lead). Tin (bedil) was especially critical for bronze-making, imported from distant sources. The Hebrew 'izabonayikh ("your fairs/markets") depicts organized commercial exchanges.

Tarshish symbolized the uttermost parts of the earth (Psalm 72:10, Isaiah 66:19). That even Spain's metals flowed to Tyre demonstrates global economic dominance—yet Jonah fled to Tarshish to escape God's presence (Jonah 1:3), illustrating that earth's farthest reaches cannot hide from divine judgment. Tyre's worldwide network makes its coming desolation more complete.

Historical Context

Tarshish, most likely Tartessos in southern Spain, was famous in antiquity for mineral wealth, particularly silver and tin. The "Ships of Tarshish" became proverbial for long-distance commercial vessels (1 Kings 10:22). Archaeological evidence confirms extensive Phoenician mining and smelting operations in Spain from the 9th century BC onward. The tin trade was especially valuable as it was

required for bronze (copper-tin alloy), and sources were scarce in the ancient Near East. Lead was used for weights, pipes, and construction.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does the accumulation of "all kinds of riches" from earth's extremities blind us to spiritual poverty?
2. What are the modern equivalents of Tyre's global trading networks, and how might they fall in God's timing?

Interlinear Text

תַּרְשִׁשׁ יֵשׁ	סַחֲרֵיָּךְ	מֵרַב	כָּל	הָ וְ
Tarshish	was thy merchant	by reason of the multitude	H3605	of all kind of riches
H8659	H5503	H7230		H1952
בְּכֶסֶף	בַּרְזֶל	בְּדָל יָלַעוּ	וְנָתְנוּ	עֲזָבוֹנֶיךָ:
with silver	iron	tin	and lead	they traded in thy fairs
H3701	H1270	H913	H5777	H5414 H5801

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 23:10 (Parallel theme): Pass through thy land as a river, O daughter of Tarshish: there is no more strength.

Genesis 10:4 (Parallel theme): And the sons of Javan; Elishah, and Tarshish, Kittim, and Dodanim.

Ezekiel 38:13 (Parallel theme): Sheba, and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof, shall say unto thee, Art thou come to take a spoil?

hast thou gathered thy company to take a prey? to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to take a great spoil?

1 Kings 10:22 (Parallel theme): For the king had at sea a navy of Tharshish with the navy of Hiram: once in three years came the navy of Tharshish, bringing gold, and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks.

From KJV Study • kjevstudy.org