

Ezekiel 27:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The men of Dedan were thy merchants; many isles were the merchandise of thine hand: they brought thee for a present horns of ivory and ebony.

Analysis

The men of Dedan were thy merchants; many isles were the merchandise of thine hand (אִיִּים רַבִּים סוֹחָרֵי יָדֶכָה, *iyyim rabbim socharei yadekh*)—Dedan (northwest Arabia, descended from Abraham through Keturah, Genesis 25:3) controlled Arabian trade routes. The phrase "many isles" (*iyyim rabbim*) likely means "coastlands" or "distant shores" rather than literal islands, emphasizing geographic extent. **They brought thee for a present horns of ivory and ebony** (בִּקְרָנוֹת שֵׁן וְהֶבְנִים, *beqarnot shen vehavnim*)—*qarnot shen* ("horns of tooth," i.e., elephant tusks) and *hovnim* (ebony wood) were luxury goods from Africa/India. The term "present" (*eshkar*) can mean tribute, suggesting vassal-like economic submission to Tyre.

These exotic luxuries—ivory for decorative inlay, ebony for fine furniture—represent consumer culture at its peak. Yet God values simple obedience over ornate offerings (1 Samuel 15:22). Solomon's throne had ivory (1 Kings 10:18), but led to spiritual compromise. Tyre's judgment warns that economic empires built on luxury consumption will be stripped bare (Revelation 18:12-14).

Historical Context

Dedan was a major Arabian trading center controlling caravan routes from southern Arabia and East Africa. Archaeological discoveries at Dedan (modern Al-Ula, Saudi Arabia) confirm its commercial importance. Ivory came primarily from

African and Indian elephants, highly prized throughout the ancient world for decorative art. Ebony (likely from tropical Africa or India) was rare and valuable for fine woodworking. The tribute-trade relationship suggests Tyre's economic dominance created quasi-imperial relationships without formal political control. By Ezekiel's time (586 BC), Tyre's commercial network extended from Arabia to the African coast.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does luxury consumption (ancient ivory/ebony, modern equivalents) exploit distant peoples and resources while feeding pride?
2. What is the difference between enjoying God's gifts and building identity/status on exotic luxuries?

Interlinear Text

בְּנֵי י	דִּדָּן	לְכָל יָם	אֲיִלִּים	רַב־יָם	סַחֲרֵי ת
The men	of Dedan	were thy merchants	isles	many	were the merchandise
H1121	H1719	H7402	H339	H7227	H5506
יָדְךָ	קַרְנֵי אוֹת	שֵׁן	וְהוֹבִיָּם	הֵשִׁיבוּ	אֶשְׁכְּרָךְ:
of thine hand	horns	of ivory	and ebony	they brought	thee for a present
H3027	H7161	H8127	H1894	H7725	H814

Additional Cross-References

Revelation 18:12 (Parallel theme): The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble,

Genesis 10:7 (Parallel theme): And the sons of Cush; Seba, and Havilah, and Sabtah, and Raamah, and Sabtechah: and the sons of Raamah; Sheba, and Dedan.

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.

Jeremiah 25:23 (Parallel theme): Dedan, and Tema, and Buz, and all that are in the utmost corners,

Ezekiel 27:20 (Parallel theme): Dedan was thy merchant in precious clothes for chariots.