

Ezekiel 27:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Syria was thy merchant by reason of the multitude of the wares of thy making: they occupied in thy fairs with emeralds, purple, and broidered work, and fine linen, and coral, and agate.

Analysis

Syria was thy merchant by reason of the multitude of the wares of thy making (merov ma'asayikh)—Aram (Syria) purchased Tyre's manufactured goods (ma'asayikh, "your works/productions"), showing Tyre wasn't merely a trading hub but a production center. **They occupied in thy fairs with emeralds, purple, and broidered work, and fine linen, and coral, and agate** (benofekh argaman veriqmah uvuts vera'mot vekhadkod)—six luxury textiles and gems: nofekh (emerald/turquoise), argaman (purple dye from murex snails), riqmah (embroidered cloth), buts (fine linen), ra'mot (coral), khadkod (ruby/agate). Purple dye was Phoenicia's signature export—the name "Phoenicia" derives from Greek phoinix ("purple").

This catalog of luxuries reveals the supply chain of vanity. Yet God clothes the lilies more gloriously (Matthew 6:28-29), and values the "fine linen" of saints' righteous deeds (Revelation 19:8) over Tyrian embroidery. Commercial empires traffic in external adornment; God's kingdom treasures internal transformation.

Historical Context

Syria (Aram) was Israel and Phoenicia's northeastern neighbor, with Damascus as its commercial capital (see v. 18). The Phoenician purple dye industry was

legendary—murex snails were harvested, crushed, and processed to create the expensive purple/crimson dyes that colored royal and priestly garments. Archaeological excavations at Phoenician sites reveal massive murex shell deposits from dye production. Embroidered cloth, fine linen from Egypt, and semi-precious stones formed the luxury textile trade that enriched Phoenician cities. By 586 BC, Tyre controlled much of this high-end production and distribution.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does obsession with external adornment (luxury goods, status symbols) distract from cultivating the "fine linen" of righteousness?
2. What does Tyre's manufacturing empire teach about the seduction of producing/consuming for human glory rather than God's?

Interlinear Text

מִצְשָׁה	יר	מִרְבֵּה	סְפִּרְתִּי	רֹא	אֶבֶן	Syria	was thy merchant	by reason of the multitude	of the wares of thy making		
H4639	H7230	H7503	H5503	H7553	H948	H5306	H713	H7553	H3539		
וְכָאָמֵת	וְכָלְדָּא	וְבָזֵז	וְרְקָמָה	וְאַרְגָּמָן	בְּנֵפֶגֶת	בְּנֵי	אַרְגָּמָן	וְרְקָמָה	וְכָלְדָּא		
H7215	H4639	H948	H7553	H713	H5306	with emeralds	purple	and broidered work	and fine linen	and coral	and agate
בְּעִזְבּוֹנִים	נְתַנְתָּה	וְתַחַת	בְּעִזְבּוֹנִים	נְתַנְתָּה	וְתַחַת	they occupied	in thy fairs				
H5414	H5801		H5414	H5801							

Additional Cross-References

Judges 10:6 (Parallel theme): And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim, and Ashtaroth, and the gods of Syria, and the gods of Zidon, and the gods of Moab, and the gods of the children of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines, and forsook the LORD, and served not him.

Ezekiel 28:13 (Parallel theme): Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created.

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org