

Ezekiel 27:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Judah, and the land of Israel, they were thy merchants: they traded in thy market wheat of Minnith, and Pannag, and honey, and oil, and balm.

Analysis

Judah, and the land of Israel, they were thy merchants: they traded in thy market wheat of Minnith, and Pannag, and honey, and oil, and balm. This verse appears in Ezekiel's extended lament over Tyre (Ezekiel 27:1-36), cataloging the city's vast trading network. The Hebrew pannag (פַּנָּג) is a rare word appearing only here, possibly referring to confections, millet cakes, or early figs. Minnith was a region in Ammon known for superior wheat (Judges 11:33).

The listed commodities—wheat, pannag, honey, oil, and balm—represent Israel and Judah's agricultural wealth. These products required fertile land, careful cultivation, and processing—gifts of God to His covenant people in the Promised Land. Israel's trading relationship with Tyre ironically shows God's people providing sustenance to a proud, commercial empire that trusted in wealth and maritime power rather than the LORD.

This verse's placement in a judgment oracle against Tyre carries theological significance. Tyre's pride in commercial success (Ezekiel 28:2-5) led to its downfall. Israel's participation in Tyre's trading network reveals entanglement with worldly economic systems and values. The fact that covenant blessings (agricultural abundance from the Promised Land) were being traded for profit in a pagan commercial empire illustrates Israel's spiritual compromise and misplaced priorities.

Historical Context

Tyre was the dominant maritime commercial power of the ancient Near East from approximately 1000-586 BC. Located on the Phoenician coast, Tyre controlled trade routes throughout the Mediterranean, establishing colonies as far as Spain (Tarshish). Archaeological excavations at Tyre and historical records from Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon confirm the city's extraordinary wealth and commercial influence.

Israel's trade relationship with Tyre dated to Solomon's era, when Hiram king of Tyre provided materials and craftsmen for the Temple (1 Kings 5:1-12). This alliance, while economically beneficial, introduced Phoenician religious influences that plagued Israel for generations. Jezebel, wife of King Ahab, was a Tyrian princess whose worship of Baal nearly destroyed true worship of Yahweh in Israel (1 Kings 16:31-33).

The specific products mentioned—wheat from Minnith (in modern Jordan), honey, oil, and balm—were staples of Israel's agricultural economy. Balm of Gilead was particularly prized for medicinal purposes and was exported to Egypt (Genesis 37:25). Ezekiel's prophecy against Tyre (chapters 26-28) was fulfilled when Nebuchadnezzar besieged the city for 13 years (585-572 BC), followed by Alexander the Great's complete destruction of the city in 332 BC. Tyre's fall demonstrated that no amount of commercial power or wealth can withstand God's judgment.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How do we, like Israel, sometimes use God's blessings primarily for economic gain rather than His glory and kingdom purposes?

2. What does this verse teach about the danger of entangling alliances with worldly systems that operate on values contrary to God's?
3. In what ways does participation in commercial and economic systems potentially compromise our spiritual priorities?
4. How should we evaluate our trading relationships and business partnerships in light of the spiritual implications revealed here?
5. What does Tyre's judgment teach us about the temporary nature of economic power and the permanence of God's kingdom?

Interlinear Text

יְהוּדָה וְאֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל הָמָּה רֹכְלֵי יָרֵךְ בָּחֹטִי י'
Judah **and the land** **of Israel** H1992 **they were thy merchants** **wheat**
H3063 H776 H3478 H7402 H2406

מִנִּיִּת וּפְנֵי ג וְדֶבֶשׁ וְשֶׁן מֶן וְצֹרֵרִי נָתְנוּ ו'
of Minnith **and Pannag** **and honey** **and oil** **and balm** **they traded**
H4511 H6436 H1706 H8081 H6875 H5414

מִעֲכָבְרָהּ:

in thy market
H4627

Additional Cross-References

Judges 11:33 (References Israel): And he smote them from Aroer, even till thou come to Minnith, even twenty cities, and unto the plain of the vineyards, with a very great slaughter. Thus the children of Ammon were subdued before the children of Israel.

1 Kings 5:9 (Parallel theme): My servants shall bring them down from Lebanon unto the sea: and I will convey them by sea in floats unto the place that thou shalt appoint me, and will cause them to be discharged there, and thou shalt receive them: and thou shalt accomplish my desire, in giving food for my household.

