

Ezekiel 27:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The ancients of Gebal and the wise men thereof were in thee thy calkers: all the ships of the sea with their mariners were in thee to occupy thy merchandise.

Analysis

The ancients of Gebal and the wise men thereof were in thee thy calkers (זִקְנֵי גֵבַל וַחַכְמֵיהֶּ, ziqnei Geval wachakameiha)—Gebal (Greek Byblos, modern Jbeil, Lebanon) provided calkers (מַחֲזִיקֵי בִדְקָה, machaziqi vidqekh), literally "strengtheners of your cracks," the shipwrights who sealed hull seams with pitch and oakum. The "ancients" (ziqnei) suggests master craftsmen, not merely elders—wisdom gained through generational expertise. **All the ships of the sea with their mariners were in thee to occupy thy merchandise** (לְעָרֹב מַעֲרָבֶךָ, la'arov ma'aravekh)—the verb 'arav means "to exchange/barter," depicting Tyre as the Mediterranean's trading hub where all maritime commerce converged.

Gebal's fame for craftsmanship (they supplied timber and artisans for Solomon's temple, 1 Kings 5:18) now serves Tyre's commercial empire. The tragedy: skills meant for God's house now build ships of prideful trade.

Historical Context

Gebal (Byblos) was one of the world's oldest continuously inhabited cities (settled c. 5000 BC), famous for cedar export and shipbuilding. The city's name gave us the Greek word biblion ("book") because Egyptian papyrus was shipped through Byblos. By 586 BC, Tyre dominated Phoenician trade, with ships from across the Mediterranean bringing cargo for redistribution. Archaeological underwater

excavations at Tyre reveal massive harbor installations confirming its role as the ancient world's premier trading port.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How do gifts and skills intended for God's glory become co-opted by prideful commercial or personal ambitions?
2. What does it mean to be a "trading hub" for spiritual goods—and when does facilitating exchange become mere merchandising?

Interlinear Text

זִקְנֵי י'	גִבַּל ל	וְחֲכָמֵי יָהּ	הָיָה יוֹ	בְּךָ הָ	מִחֲזִיקֵי י'
The ancients	of Gebal	and the wise	H1961	H0	H2388
H2205	H1380	H2450			
	בְּדָלְךָ הָ	כָּל	אֲנִי וְ	הַיָּם	
	men thereof were in thee thy calkers	H3605	all the ships	of the sea	
	H919		H591	H3220	
וּמַלְחֵיהֶם	הָיָה יוֹ	בְּךָ הָ	לְעֹרֵב	מִעֲבָדָךָ:	
with their mariners	H1961	H0	were in thee to occupy	thy merchandise	
H4419			H6148	H4627	

Additional Cross-References

1 Kings 5:18 (Parallel theme): And Solomon's builders and Hiram's builders did hew them, and the stonesquarers: so they prepared timber and stones to build the house.

Joshua 13:5 (Parallel theme): And the land of the Giblites, and all Lebanon, toward the sunrising, from Baal-gad under mount Hermon unto the entering into Hamath.

Psalms 83:7 (Parallel theme): Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek; the Philistines with the inhabitants of Tyre;

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