EZEKIEL

Chapter 27

*A Lament for Tyre*

**The word of the LORD came to me:  2 “Son of man, take up a lament concerning Tyre.  3 Say to Tyre, situated at the gateway to the sea, merchant of peoples on many coasts, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: ”‘You say, O Tyre, “I am perfect in beauty.” 4 Your domain was on the high seas; your builders brought your beauty to perfection. 5 They made all your timbers of pine trees from Senir; they took a cedar from Lebanon to make a mast for you. 6 Of oaks from Bashan they made your oars; of cypress wood from the coasts of Cyprus they made your deck, inlaid with ivory. 7 Fine embroidered linen from Egypt was your sail and served as your banner; your awnings were of blue and purple from the coasts of Elishah. 8 Men of Sidon and Arvad were your oarsmen; your skilled men, O Tyre, were aboard as your seamen. 9 Veteran craftsmen of Gebal were on board as shipwrights to caulk your seams. All the ships of the sea and their sailors came alongside to trade for your wares. 10 ”‘Men of Persia, Lydia and Put served as soldiers in your army. They hung their shields and helmets on your walls, bringing you splendor. 11 Men of Arvad and Helech manned your walls on every side; men of Gammad were in your towers. They hung their shields around your walls; they brought your beauty to perfection. 12 ”‘Tarshish did business with you because of your great wealth of goods; they exchanged silver, iron, tin and lead for your merchandise. 13 ”‘Greece, Tubal and Meshech traded with you; they exchanged slaves and articles of bronze for your wares. 14 ”‘Men of Beth Togarmah exchanged work horses, war horses and mules for your merchandise. 15 ”‘The men of Rhodes traded with you, and many coastlands were your customers; they paid you with ivory tusks and ebony. 16 ”‘Aram did business with you because of your many products; they exchanged turquoise, purple fabric, embroidered work, fine linen, coral and rubies for your merchandise. 17 ”‘Judah and Israel traded with you; they exchanged wheat from Minnith and confections, honey, oil and balm for your wares. 18 ”‘Damascus, because of your many products and great wealth of goods, did business with you in wine from Helbon and wool from Zahar. 19 ”‘Danites and Greeks from Uzal bought your merchandise; they exchanged wrought iron, cassia and calamus for your wares. 20 ”‘Dedan traded in saddle blankets with you. 21 ”‘Arabia and all the princes of Kedar were your customers; they did business with you in lambs, rams and goats. 22 ”‘The merchants of Sheba and Raamah traded with you; for your merchandise they exchanged the finest of all kinds of spices and precious stones, and gold. 23 ”‘Haran, Canneh and Eden and merchants of Sheba, Asshur and Kilmad traded with you.  24 In your marketplace they traded with you beautiful garments, blue fabric, embroidered work and multicolored rugs with cords twisted and tightly knotted. 25 ”‘The ships of Tarshish serve as carriers for your wares. You are filled with heavy cargo in the heart of the sea. 26 Your oarsmen take you out to the high seas. But the east wind will break you to pieces in the heart of the sea. 27 Your wealth, merchandise and wares, your mariners, seamen and shipwrights, your merchants and all your soldiers, and everyone else on board will sink into the heart of the sea on the day of your shipwreck. 28 The shorelands will quake when your seamen cry out. 29 All who handle the oars will abandon their ships; the mariners and all the seamen will stand on the shore. 30 They will raise their voice and cry bitterly over you; they will sprinkle dust on their heads and roll in ashes. 31 They will shave their heads because of you and will put on sackcloth. They will weep over you with anguish of soul and with bitter mourning. 32 As they wail and mourn over you, they will take up a lament concerning you: “Who was ever silenced like Tyre, surrounded by the sea?” 33 When your merchandise went out on the seas, you satisfied many nations; with your great wealth and your wares you enriched the kings of the earth. 34 Now you are shattered by the sea in the depths of the waters; your wares and all your company have gone down with you. 35 All who live in the coastlands are appalled at you; their kings shudder with horror and their faces are distorted with fear. 36 The merchants among the nations hiss at you; you have come to a horrible end and will be no more.’”**

The basic outline of the chapter is simple. After the short preamble in 27:1–3a, we have a long poetic “lament” (קִינָה) in 27:3b–11, 25b–36, bisected by a basically prose catalog of the types of goods carried by Tyrian ships (27:12–25a). Outlines offered in other commentaries often vary by a verse or two from that given above, because the transitions are not always clear-cut. One may also note a lament within the lament. While the entire chapter is a lament, in 27:32b–36, a second lament appears, emanating from the lips of the doomed sailors. In fact, it is, strictly speaking, closer to the original use of a “lament” (קִינָה), uttered at the death of an individual, but the lament genre was widely adapted for the fall of also cities and nations. Especially Zimmerli expends great effort in attempting to reconstruct the presumed original 3:2 rhythm of much of the oracle, but this involves such wholesale emendation and reconstruction of the Masoretic Text of the Hebrew Old Testament that the approach is today largely considered abortive. (CC)

The chapter opens without indication of date or setting, nor is any to be detected within the body of the chapter. There is no indication of Tyrian submission to Babylon nor of Yahweh’s later amendment to this prophecy in 29:17–21. Hence, a plausible hypothesis is that it is a slightly later expansion of the “lament” (קִינָה) in 26:17–18, which is dated to the eleventh year of Jehoiachin’s exile (26:1), that is, perhaps spring 586, not long before Jerusalem’s fall in summer 586. There are other indications of some close connections with the previous chapter. There is a similarity between the lament at the end of this chapter and the brief one in 26:17–18. In addition, 27:2 begins with Yahweh addressing Ezekiel by וְאַתָּה, “(and) you,” which elsewhere in Ezekiel always signals a subdivision within a larger oracle. (CC)

The contents of the chapter itself dictate that this part of the commentary be very brief. After the word-event formula in 27:1, “the Word of Yahweh came to me,” and the citation formula in 27:3b, “thus says the Lord Yahweh,” the divine name is not heard again. (CC)

It may well have been that some in Judah secretly admired the way in which Tyre, in her virtually impregnable position, could all but laugh off Babylonian ambitions to dominate her. (CC)

But, obviously, we misread if we think the chapter is but a “secular” interlude in the midst of heavily theological material. Its very position, sandwiched between chapters 26 and 28, virtually guarantees that it is not. In chapter 26, all the sea chiefs loudly lament Tyre’s fall, but the dimensions of the catastrophe are not revealed. In this chapter, the background of that nearly universal mourning is detailed. And in chapter 28, the justification for Tyre’s fall is spelled out at length: it is her hubris at her unrivalled skill and success. After reaching chapter 27, the basis of her hubris, by any human standard, is obvious. But all her expertise and success has not exempted her from divine judgment, which she shall receive on “the day of Yahweh” (the phrase is used explicitly for the day of Egypt’s judgment in 30:3). Like the “Babylon” of the NT Apocalypse (see Revelation 17–19), which was also “seated upon many waters” (Rev 17:1), Tyre too must meet her Judge because she has challenged and denied the one true God, who is the Lord of history. (CC)

**27:2** *lament.* See note on 19:1. (CSB)

**27:3** *I am perfect in beauty.* See 28:12; cf. 28:2 for a similar prideful statement. Since Tyre is described as a stately ship in the following verses, some translate, “You are a ship, perfect in beauty.” (CSB)

**27:4** *brought your beauty to perfection.* See v. 11. (CSB)

**27:5** *Senir.* Amorite name for Hermon, the Anti-Lebanon mountain (or range) famed for cedar. (CSB)

**27:6** *Bashan.* See note on 39:18. (CSB)

*Cyprus.* The Hebrew word (CSB)

*Kittim* (see NIV text note) was originally the name of a town in southern Cyprus colonized by Phoenicia. (CSB)

**27:7** *Elishah.* A city on the east side of Cyprus; also the oldest name for Cyprus (but see note on Ge 10:4). (CSB)

**27:8** *Sidon.* A harbor city 25 miles north of Tyre, which sometimes rivaled her in political and commercial importance (see note on 28:21). (CSB)

*Arvad.* Another Phoenician island-city, off the Mediterranean coast and north of Sidon. (CSB)

**27:9** *Gebal.* Byblos, an important ancient city on the coast between Sidon and Arvad (see NIV text note and 1Ki 5:18). (CSB)

**27:10** *Lydia.* In Asia Minor. (CSB)

*Put.* Libya, in North Africa, west of Egypt. (CSB)

*soldiers.* The ship image is abandoned, and Tyre is now described literally—as a city (see “walls” and “towers” in this and the next verse), complete with a mercenary army gathered from the whole world. (CSB)

**27:11** *Arvad.* See note on v. 8. (CSB)

*Helech.* Cilicia, the mountainous region in southeast Asia Minor. The name occurs only here in the Bible. (CSB)

*Gammad.* Either (1) northern Asia Minor, or (2) a coastal town near Arvad. It is not mentioned elsewhere in the Bible. (CSB)

**27:12** *Tarshish.* Traditionally located on the coast of southern Spain, but the island of Sardinia has also been suggested. Passages such as 1Ki 10:22; Jnh 1:3 imply that it was a long distance from the Canaanite coast. The list of places in vv. 12–23 generally follows a west-to-east direction. (CSB)

**27:13** *Tubal and Meshech.* Both in Asia Minor. (CSB)

**27:14** *Beth Togarmah.* In eastern Asia Minor, present-day Armenia (see 38:6). (CSB)

*work horses.* Asia Minor was known for its horses (see 1Ki 10:28 and NIV text notes there). (CSB)

**27:15** *Rhodes.* A large island off the southwest coast of Asia Minor that served as gateway to the Aegean islands. It was an early major trading center (see Ac 21:1). (CSB)

**27:16** *Aram.* Syria. Since Damascus, the capital of Aram, is mentioned in v. 18, perhaps Edom is meant here (see NIV text note; see also 25:12 and note). (CSB)

**27:17** *Israel traded with you.* In the past. Since 722–721 b.c. Israel had ceased to exist as a political state. (CSB)

*Minnith.* An Ammonite town, apparently famous for its wheat; “wheat from Minnith” possibly denoted a superior quality of wheat. (CSB)

*balm.* Gum or oil from one of several plants; a product of Gilead (see Ge 37:25; Jer 8:22; 46:11). (CSB)

**27:18** *Damascus.* Capital of Aram (see note on v. 16; see also Isa 7:8). (CSB)

*Helbon.* A town north of Damascus, still in existence and still a wine-making center. The name occurs only here in the Bible. (CSB)

*Zahar.* Modern S\ah\ra, an area northwest of Damascus, where grazing is still common today. (CSB)

**27:19** *Danites.* A term that Homer used for Greeks. Some read (as does the Septuagint) “and wine from” for “Danites and Greeks from.”

*Uzal.* See Ge 10:27; 1Ch 1:21; perhaps Yemen or the area between Haran and the Tigris. *cassia.* Similar to the cinnamon tree. The only other Biblical mention of it is in Ex 30:24, where it appears in a list of aromatic plants.

*calamus.* An aromatic reed.

**27:20** *Dedan.* See note on 25:13.

**27:21** *Arabia and … Kedar.* A general expression for the Bedouin tribes from Aram to the Arabian Desert. For Kedar see Isa 42:11; 60:7; Jer 49:28.

**27:22** *Sheba.* See note on 23:42.

*Raamah.* A city in southern Arabia.

**27:23** *Haran.* A city east of Carchemish, in present-day eastern Turkey. It was well-known in ancient times as a center both for trade and for the worship of the moon-god Sin. From here Abraham moved to Canaan (see Ge 11:31; 12:4).

*Canneh.* Of uncertain location, presumably in Mesopotamia. It is often identified with Calneh (Isa 10:9; Am 6:2).

*Eden.* A district south of Haran, mentioned in connection with Haran in 2Ki 19:12. See Beth Eden in Am 1:5. *Sheba.* See note on 23:42.

*Asshur.* Can mean the city, the country (Assyria) or the people (Assyrians). Here it is probably the city south of Nineveh that gave its name to the country.

*Kilmad.* If a town, it is yet unidentified; presumably in Mesopotamia. Some read “all Media.”

**27:25** *Tarshish.* See note on v. 12. The ship image is resumed (see notes on vv. 3, 10).

**27:26** *east wind.* Disastrous at sea (Ps 48:7) as well as on land (Jer 18:17). It possibly symbolizes Nebuchadnezzar (as in 17:10; 19:12).

**27:30** *dust on their heads.* See 26:16 for a similar scene.

*roll in ashes.* Cf. Mic 1:10.

**27:31** *shave their heads.* Cf. 7:18; Isa 15:2; 22:12.