

**Is. 23:1 The burden of Tyre. Howl, ye ships of Tarshish; for it is laid waste, so that there is no house, no entering in: from the land of Chittim it is revealed to them.**

Some facts about Tyre: It was a Phoenician city—that eventually included both a mainland and island location. Hiram, the King of Tyre, was in league with Kings David and Solomon. Lumber and workmen from Tyre helped build Solomon's Temple and his palace. Jezebel, Ahab's wife, was a daughter of a king of Tyre. When threatened by the Babylonians, the people of Tyre were able to save themselves by transporting the whole city to an island offshore. Alexander the Great finally conquered the island kingdom after a 7-month siege during which he constructed a bridge/ramp that connected the island to the mainland from the debris left when Neb destroyed the empty city.

Tarshish = a seaport that transported silver, iron, tin and lead to Tyre. It was considered to be far from Tyre and Israel, but its exact location is not known. Some consider it to be in Africa, others in Spain or Britain.

Isaiah is directing this burden to the people of Tyre; he is prophesying of a future event. Tarshish, one of its main trading partners, is put on notice that Tyre has been destroyed. As I read on in this chapter, this destruction must reference the time that the island city was destroyed.

The merchants of Chittim (probably Cyprus) were the ones who gave the news to the merchants of Tarshish, probably when they stopped there as part of their trade route on the way to Tyre.

**Is. 23:2 Be still, ye inhabitants of the isle; thou whom the merchants of Zidon, that pass over the sea, have replenished.**

**Is. 23:3 And by great waters the seed of Sihor, the harvest of the river, is her revenue; and she is a mart of nations.**

Evidently, the isle (Tyre) was a partner in trade with Zidon from whom they restocked much of their merchandise. Zidon was the oldest of the Phoenician cities and planted Tyre as a colony to increase their fishing industry (JFB).

Sihor is another name for the Nile River; it was known for the great harvest it produced along its banks as a result of its yearly flooding. Evidently, Tyre had a great trade with the land of Egypt. Tyre had seemingly positioned itself as the Super Walmart of the nations.

**Is. 23:4 Be thou ashamed, O Zidon: for the sea hath spoken, *even* the strength of the sea, saying, I travail not, nor bring forth children, neither do I nourish up young men, *nor* bring up virgins.**

It seems that Zidon is to feel the repercussions of Tyre's destruction as the parent city of the colony.

**Is. 23:5 As at the report concerning Egypt, so shall they be sorely pained at the report of Tyre.**

The following words are in the Hebrew: report Egypt pained report Tyre. It makes more sense to say that Egypt is also going to experience great pain and sorrow at the loss of her trading partner. (This KJV wording is confusing, but the NIV is clearer. – “When word comes to Egypt, they will be in anguish at the report from Tyre.”)

**Is. 23:6 Pass ye over to Tarshish; howl, ye inhabitants of the isle.**

**Is. 23:7 Is this your joyous city, whose antiquity is of ancient days? her own feet shall carry her afar off to sojourn.**

The people left on the island of Tyre are encouraged to find refuge in Tarshish. The prophecy seems to be mocking the pride of the people of Tyre. They were proud of their heritage as an ancient city and of their self-sufficiency, and it would be greatly humbling to be reduced to the position of fugitives.

**Is. 23:8 Who hath taken this counsel against Tyre, the crowning city, whose merchants are princes, whose traffickers are the honourable of the earth?**

**Is. 23:9 The LORD of hosts hath purposed it, to stain the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the honourable of the earth.**

Tyre was a greatly admired city in the eyes of the world. Those who traded with her included princes and nobility of the earth. (This brings to mind the description of Babylon in Revelation.)

Who is really the one responsible for the downfall of Tyre? Isaiah makes it clear that it is the work of YHWH. Why did He purpose its destruction? Because of its pride. God hates the sin of pride.

*Proverbs 6:16-17 These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood....*

This should sound a great alarm today to the people of the United States.

**Is. 23:10 Pass through thy land as a river, O daughter of Tarshish: there is no more strength.**

**Is. 23:11 He stretched out his hand over the sea, he shook the kingdoms: the LORD hath given a commandment against the merchant city, to destroy the strong holds thereof.**

I'm not sure what is being said in the first part of verse 10. The word for *river* indicates a reference to the Nile. It seems to be saying that Tarshish is going to have to depend on their own resources since their main trading harbor has been destroyed. Picking up with the last half of verse 10 emphasis is being given that once God has determined judgment, it is sure. Isaiah seems to be indicating that the rest of the Phoenician cities will also be destroyed.

**Is. 23:12** And he said, Thou shalt no more rejoice, O thou oppressed virgin, daughter of Zidon: arise, pass over to Chittim; there also shalt thou have no rest.

Even though the people of Tyre (the daughter of Zidon) escape to Chittim (Cyprus), they will not find rest (an indication that they won't be able to establish roots there).

**Is. 23:13** Behold the land of the Chaldeans; this people was not, *till* the Assyrian founded it for them that dwell in the wilderness: they set up the towers thereof, they raised up the palaces thereof; *and* he brought it to ruin.

Chaldeans = Those from the land area between the Tigris and Euphrates better known as the land of Babylon, currently centered in Iraq.

Again, the wording in the KJV is confusing. The NIV and NLT agree that it is speaking of the destruction caused in Babylon by Assyria.

*NIV - Look at the land of the Babylonians, this people that is now of no account! The Assyrians have made it a place for desert creatures; they raised up their siege towers, they stripped its fortresses bare and turned it into a ruin.*

*NLT - Look at the land of Babylonia—the people of that land are gone! The Assyrians have handed Babylon over to the wild beasts. They have built siege ramps against its walls, torn down its palaces, and turned it into a heap of rubble.*

“The Assyrian.....he brought it to ruin – The wording seems to be emphasizing the king or leader of Assyria.

**Is. 23:14** Howl, ye ships of Tarshish: for your strength is laid waste.

It sounds like Tarshish was afforded a certain security because of their position as a trading partner with Tyre. That position is no more.

**Is. 23:15** And it shall come to pass in that day, that Tyre shall be forgotten seventy years, according to the days of one king: after the end of seventy years shall Tyre sing as an harlot.

**Is. 23:16** Take an harp, go about the city, thou harlot that hast been forgotten; make sweet melody, sing many songs, that thou mayest be remembered.

**Is. 23:17** And it shall come to pass after the end of seventy years, that the LORD will visit Tyre, and she shall turn to her hire, and shall commit fornication with all the kingdoms of the world upon the face of the earth.

This seems to be a confirmation of the message of Jeremiah:

*Jeremiah 25:11-12* And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and **these nations** shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that

*nation, saith the LORD, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations.*

The king of Babylon when she fell was Belshazzar. Evidently, after the fall of the Babylonian empire, Tyre was safe to set up her business and advertise once again. JFB had an interesting comment: "Large marts of commerce are often compared to harlots seeking many lovers, that is, they court merchants of all nations, and admit any one for the sake of gain."

**Is. 23:18 And her merchandise and her hire shall be holiness to the LORD: it shall not be treasured nor laid up; for her merchandise shall be for them that dwell before the LORD, to eat sufficiently, and for durable clothing.**

This verse is definitely talking about a time when Tyre will provide for the people of YHWH. This seems to be a reference to the position that Tyre will enjoy during the Messianic Kingdom. (I think Isaiah is seeing those mountain peaks in the distance and not the valleys in between.)

JFB = Jamieson, Fausset & Brown