

A Prophecy Against Tzor (Tyre) ~ Part 1b

Yesha'yahu 23:1-10

In my last post, we began to examine the last of the prophecies that **Yesha'yahu** had received from **Adonai** against the nations surrounding **Isra'el** and **Y'hudah**: **A Prophecy Against Tzor (Tyre) ~ Yesha'yahu 23:1-10**. Unfortunately, I got caught up going down a rabbit trail, and we didn't get beyond verse 1. In this post, we will explore the full passage.

In the twenty-third chapter of **Yesha'yahu**, we come to the final judgment pronounced on the nations surrounding **Isra'el** and **Y'hudah**. Here, judgment is declared on the **Phoenician** city of **Tzor** (Tyre), in present-day **Lebanon** not far from the northern border of **Isra'el** on the **Mediterranean Sea**. So capable a seafaring people were the people of **Tzor** that there has been speculation that they reached the shores of North America. ¹ And, because they used their navy for commerce as well as for conquest, they grew very wealthy.

¹ A prophecy about Tzor: Howl, you "Tarshish" ships, because the harbor is destroyed! On returning from Kittim, they discover they cannot enter it.

Even the people inhabiting **Kittim**, or the present-day island of **Cyprus**, would hear about the judgment coming down on the city of **Tzor**.

Tzor was the southernmost major city of **Phoenicia**. It was a wealthy city, due to its development and control of sea trade. As an island city (with overflow population living on the mainland) its major port was easily protected. **Tzor** had established a trading colony on **Tarshish**. The ships of **Tarshish** were particularly impressive since they traveled so far between **Tzor** and **Iberia**. The destruction of **Tzor** prophetically described in this prophecy is difficult to pin down from the description made here. In the latter part of the eighth century and the early seventh century BCE, the **Assyrians** tried to take **Tzor** several times. However, the prophecy may also look forward to **Nebuchadnezzar's** attack on **Tzor** (including a thirteen-year siege) in the sixth century and perhaps even to the final destruction of **Tzor** by **Alexander the Great** in 332 BCE. **Cyprus** was a large island about 75 miles west of **Tzor** and would have been the last port of call before reaching **Tzor**. ²

² Silence, you who live on the coast, you who have been enriched by the merchants of Tzidon crossing the sea.

Tzidon was another important **Phoenician** trade port north of **Tzor**. Its mention indicates that, though the prophecy was directed explicitly toward **Tzor** (the city closest to **Yerushalayim**), the whole of **Phoenicia** was under judgment. The silence following the defeat of **Tzor** would be a marked contrast to the bustle of commerce that once characterized her.

³ By the great water, the grain of Shichor, the harvest of the Nile, brought you profits. She was marketplace for the nations.

Phoenician merchants transported items from throughout the Mediterranean. The grain from **Shichor** represents the fruitful harvests of Egypt, shipped up the **Nile** and on to the coast. Standing out from the coast approximately six hundred yards from the mainland, the island city of **Tzor** and its harbor were secure from anything but a sustained siege. The waters were also deep enough to allow for heavily laden ships to approach and offload their cargoes. Dedicated to commercial activity, **Tzor** was supplied with food and other essentials. Ships from **Tzor** established colonies, including some on **Cyprus** and the **North African** city of

¹ Jon Courson's Application Commentary Old Testament Volume 2.

² HCSB Study Bible

Carthage, around the **Mediterranean** to draw on the resources of these areas, especially metals, and to funnel goods back and forth between the eastern and western **Mediterranean**.³

⁴ Shame, Tzidon, for the sea speaks; the fortress of the sea says, "I no longer have labor pains or bear children, yet I have raised neither boys nor girls."

The **sea** here is personified to lament for its barrenness in the loss of **Tzidon**.

⁵ When the report reaches Egypt, they will be in anguish at the fate of Tzor.

Egypt will also lament because it had lost an important trading partner.

⁶ Cross over to Tarshish! Howl, you who live on the coast!

Because of the destruction of the **Phoenician** coastland, its inhabitants will have to disperse, some perhaps going as far as the trading colony **Tarshish**.

⁷ Is this your boisterous city, whose feet long ago in antiquity carried her off to found distant colonies?

The **boisterous city** is **Tzor**, the ancient city that established **Tarshish** as a colony. After it is destroyed, its inhabitants will flee to **Tarshish**.

⁸ Who planned this against Tzor, the city that once bestowed crowns, whose merchants are princes, whose traders are honored throughout the earth? ⁹ Adonai-Tzva'ot planned it to break the pride of all the arrogant, to humiliate all those who are honored everywhere on earth.

Tzor's wealth had brought her enormous power and prestige. In answer to the question of verse 8, the prophecy proclaims that the One who planned the fall of the magnificent city of **Tzor** was none other than **Adonai-Tzva'ot**. Thus, this prophecy continues the teaching that God is sovereign over all nations.

¹⁰ People of Tarshish! Nothing restricts you now. You can flow freely over your land just like the Nile River. ~ Yesha'yahu 23:2-10 (CJB)

Now **Tarshish** will overflow with all the refugees from the destroyed cities of the **Phoenician** coastland.

In my next post, we continue to explore **A Prophecy Against Tzor (Tzor) ~ Part 2** in **Yesha'yahu 23:11-25**.

³ The IVP Bible Background Commentary – Old Testament