

# Today's global economic crisis—the final migration of Tyre (2)

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*The details of the leadership of Tyre in the time of Ezekiel are considered this month. The organisation of this economic empire, with its power to manipulate currency values, becomes a model for the global economics of our world.*

**E**ZEKIEL 28 deals with the leadership of Tyre. It is an enigmatic chapter, especially the lament for the king of Tyre. However, it is useful to remember that this is an economic empire that is being judged. Its primary motivation is power through trade and money, as opposed to a religious or military style of government.

## The government of Tyre

In most modern market-based economies there are the resource sector and the financial sector. One is made up of multinationals, who manage raw materials and factories; the other is made up of banks, which manage the money supply. A similar system was present in Tyre. Ezekiel 28 presents us with two rulers, a king and a prince. Although some have argued that they represent the same person, Aristotle notes that the Phoenicians, particularly in Carthage, were governed by an oligarchic style of democracy. Land-owning citizens had a vote in the day-to-day administration, but the oligarchy ruled from behind the scenes. Comprising the wealthiest nobles, these men could protect their wealth and veto democratic decisions that did not go their way. From among their ranks a king was elected who was accountable to the nobles.

This multiple system of accountability protected their wealth from the greed and foibles of dictatorships. The same system was operational in Venice, which was modelled on Tyre. A cursory glance at modern market-based democracies and the relationship between corporate fund-raising

and government appointments reveals that not a lot has changed. For example, the last three Secretaries of the Treasury in the United States have been ex-Goldman Sachs Chief Executives.

## The prince of Tyre

In Ezekiel 28 the prince of Tyre is situated in the middle of the ocean, is likened six times to God, and is attributed wisdom greater than Daniel. Ezekiel says of the prince that no secret was hid from him, while his monopoly on trade and his ability to influence the balance of power from behind the scenes gave him godlike power and pride. From this we can assume that the prince was in charge of the maritime division and, by extension, the resource sector. Today the prince of Tyre would be represented by the most powerful multinationals in the mining and resource sector; prime candidates would be Exxon, BHP Billiton and BP.

## The King of Tyre

The king of Tyre, on the other hand, is situated in a mountain in Eden, the garden of God. The first thing God says of him is that he “seals the sun”; in the Hebrew that means to set the standard, implying the ability to ‘seasonally adjust’ the weights and measures that set the value of the commodities traded. There are two ways to interpret the Hebrew in this text, financially or architecturally; both are supported by the text and may be deliberately related ideas, as temples and treasuries were often one and the same. Certainly, in this passage, money measurements, architecture, trade and religion are blended together. A comparison with the lament for Egypt (Ezek. 29) shows a similar blending of Egyptian characteristics with Egyptian myth and legend.

With resources you have to know where they are and have the wherewithal to obtain them and process them into something profitable. But if one controls the medium of exchange, where the resources are and where the market is it does not matter. BP has to worry about geographical issues such as the Gulf of Mexico and Nigerian pirates, but the Federal Reserve can control both from Washington DC by upping or lowering interest rates, or by granting or denying loans.

In 2008 a United States dollar credit crunch aimed at Russia triggered a seventy per cent drop in their dollar-denominated share market over a two-day period and caused oil prices to plunge. Power over money transcends borders, resources, nations, languages, laws, markets, governments, customs and culture. A rise in interest rates affects everything, and the devaluing of a currency affects everyone; if that currency is the international reserve currency, the impacts are global.

Tyre was a multinational trading entity whose primary focus was monopolising resources, trade and the medium of exchange. This is certainly what she achieved at her peak. The most powerful form of monopoly is control over the medium of exchange. The manipulation of weights and measures was the seat of the king's power and is mentioned first. Weights and measures were the currency. Coinage was intended to standardise the weights to simplify the process and do away with the scales.

In the proverbs for the kings we read about people who swung the balance in their favour by the manipulation of weights and measures (Prov. 20:10-23). Kings were the class of people with the power and will to corrupt themselves in this way. Yet this ability to "seal the sum" was the source of the king of Tyre's power over his trading empire. Adjusting the weights to change the value of the commodities traded and to gain the best possible exchange rate was how he maximised his income with little effort.

Similar language about setting weights and measures is found in the United States Constitution as the responsibility of Congress (see panel). It is interesting to note that since 1913 the power to regulate the value of money has been in the hands of the independent Federal Reserve System.

Historians speak of the Phoenician standard; we get a hint of this centralised trading system when Abraham purchased his grave using

weights that were "the standard recognised by merchants" (Gen. 23:16, NEB).

### The seat of power

In Ezekiel's lament of the king of Tyre the sea is not mentioned once, yet Eden, mountains and stones are mentioned. It is worth noting that Tyre at its peak monopolised trade both by sea and land, and had a number of land-based trading cities at key crossroads.

In Ezekiel 31:9,15, Eden is identified as Lebanon, so it is reasonable to assume that the king of Tyre lived somewhere in the Lebanese mountains. Baalbek is the most likely candidate. It was Tyre's most holy site, situated in the valley of Aven at the crossroad between the main north-south trade routes. Amos 1:5 may hold a clue: "I will break the gate-bar of Damascus, and cut off the inhabitants

## Article 1–The Legislative Branch

### Section 8–Powers of Congress

To borrow money on the credit of the United States

To regulate Commerce with foreign Nations, and among the several States, and with the Indian Tribes

To coin Money, regulate the Value thereof, and of foreign Coin, and *fix the Standard of Weights and Measures*

from the Valley of Aven, and him who holds the sceptre from Beth-eden; and the people of Syria shall go into exile to Kir, says the LORD" (ESV).

Tyre and Zidon were part of Israel's sovereign territory under David and Solomon, yet here is a king within someone else's kingdom reigning over his own city-state as a separate entity. How was this possible? A deal was struck where Hiram managed Israel's economy in return for autonomy. It was a truly symbiotic relationship, which we read of in many places, most notable in 1 Kings 10.

Tyre cannot be seen entirely as a national entity as we understand it, because it operated in this way within almost all the nations which hosted its bases. There were trading bases in every country along the Mediterranean seaboard, but Tyre did not control these nations directly, nor did it conquer them. In many cases they were invited in because of the links and ties they brought with them.

If we wish to understand Tyre we need to think of her more as a corporate entity. For example, BP and Shell operate in most countries where there is oil; they exercise a degree of influence, they are welcomed for the contribution they make to

the national economy, but they do not own their host nations. A very good historical example of this is the East India Company; at its peak it controlled almost the entire nation of India from a boardroom in London. A good modern example is the City of London Corporation—a city within a city which enjoys privileges and autonomy that no other corporation has.

The reverence in which Baalbek was held ensured its survival and upkeep until the times of Constantine. It was one of the primary seats of paganism and a place for pilgrimage throughout the Greek and Roman Empires. Like the Egyptian Heliopolis, it was not just a religious site but a site of science and learning as well. That it was in Syrian territory yet controlled by Tyre is just another example of the Hiram-David relationship that was a feature of Tyre's international relationships.

When famine came to Egypt, Joseph took everything that everyone owned and taxed them twenty per cent, but it is twice mentioned that he did not touch the sanctuary of the priests in On (the first Heliopolis). This might be to do with the fact that his father-in-law was the high priest, but it is probably more likely that On was a separate entity which even the Pharaohs feared to touch.

Baalbek was the headquarters of Baal/sun worship. The Greeks called it the second Heliopolis, the first being On in Egypt. It had its own world trade monument in the largest cut stones ever used in any human construction. It was also situated in an Edenic setting, with two rivers dividing and branching out from it. All successive economic empires took over Baalbek and venerated it, using it for worship and trade. During Roman times it was the largest temple complex in the empire. It was not until Constantine Christianised the empire that Baalbek fell into disuse.

### The apostasy of Dan and Baalbek

Dan was in the northernmost part of Israel (Judg. 20:1; 1 Sam. 3:20), which started from the pass of Hamath in the Beqaa Valley (Num. 34:8; Josh. 13:5). Laish, the city the Danites conquered, was situated in a lush valley in Beth-Rehob (Judg. 18:27,28). Rehob is identified in Numbers 13:21 as situated in the northern border near the pass of Hamath. Others have noted that the cut stones at Dan bear the same style as those of Solomon's temple.<sup>1</sup>

This opens the tantalising possibility that Baalbek could well have been the site of the apostasy of Dan and of the house of high places built by



**Baalbek in Lebanon is the site of huge ancient ruins, some dating back to Canaanite times, and possibly the residence of the king of Tyre.**

Jeroboam. This may explain why Dan is not listed as one of the glorified tribes of Revelation 7.

### Control over money

A brief consideration of the history of money reveals a sorry tale of power, corruption and manipulation. When men gain control over the money supply, human nature dictates that they abuse this power for their own gain. The Bible speaks out about the different methods used to alter the value of goods traded. Altering the balance and changing the weights are condemned. Even when standardised weights were introduced in the form of coinage by the Lydians, the same trick was employed by shaving off the metal, or mixing in base metals such as lead so as to stamp more coins with less precious metal.

Rome's denarius started life one hundred per cent silver. When the empire collapsed the prized denarius, the reserve currency of the empire, was ninety-five per cent lead. In the age of the gold standard, the paper receipts, which were supposed to represent a value of gold in storage, were overprinted at a rate of ten paper receipts to one article of gold. Today the purchasing power of our paper money is manipulated by interest rates

1. [http://www.sacredsites.com/middle\\_east/lebanon/baalbek.htm](http://www.sacredsites.com/middle_east/lebanon/baalbek.htm)

imposed by central banks, which also control the quantity and value of the money issued: under-issue and you have a credit crunch; over-issue and ultimately you could end up with Weimar Republic- or Zimbabwean-style hyperinflation.

### **The power to control the reserve currency**

Rome was not the first, but it is certainly the most documented, empire to recognise the advantages of enforcing a centrally controlled currency on conquered subjects. Caesar ruled from Rome, but the impact of his monetary decisions was felt in every corner of the empire. Yet few would attribute the rising price of bread to Caesar's decision to mix lead with silver. The change was slow and filtered through many layers, thus masking the cause from the effect. And this is the beauty of the banking system today.

"Whose likeness and inscription is this? They said, 'Caesar's'. Then he said to them, 'Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's'" (Mt. 22:20,21, ESV).

It is interesting to view the statement of Jesus from this perspective. Such a statement might sound strange. Most people think their money belongs to them, but it does not. Christ is correct; Caesar issued the money, Caesar controlled its value, and Caesar could manipulate its purchasing power.

Nothing has changed. Take out a note from your wallet and examine all the signatures and names. You will find the name of the Central Bank Governor listed. These are the owners and controllers of our money, and we have no say in the decisions they make over the value of our labour and savings. Money and God are placed side by side on more than one occasion in the Bible. We need to question what money is, what gives it value, who controls it and how. The answers may surprise us, but herein lies the power of king of Tyre.

### **Who is the king of Tyre today?**

If we were to identify specifically who the king of Tyre is today it could be a very difficult exercise. As a system, however, there is little doubt that the king of Tyre is represented by the banking system, in particular the central banks which control the issue of a nation's money supply. Currently the United States dollar is the currency of world trade, so the king of Tyre is an individual or group of individuals who set and manipulate the value of the dollar.

In the next article we will consider the connection between Tyre and the Jews, the judgement and migration of Tyre and its relevance to today's economic crisis.

[\(To be concluded\)](#)