THE IRON EXPORT FROM UZAL (EZEKIEL XXVII 19)

The opening words of Ezek. xxvii 19, weyawan wedyan mëuzaal, have always presented an obstacle for translators and commentators on Ezekiel. In most manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible mëuzaal is vocalized as a pu'al participle—mëuzzal—whose meaning is unclear, and in no way fits the context of this verse. The correct vocalization is mëuzaal—"from Uzal". This form appears in several Hebrew manuscripts, as well as being presupposed by the Septuagint (亹 'Αζάλ) and other ancient translations. But Uzal, as an iron-producing country, and Dan as a non-Israelite toponym, are unidentified. Moreover, Yawan, which is usually the name for Ionia and Greece, is also problematic because it appears here together with the unidentified Dan and Uzal. Not only is the identification of these toponyms a puzzle, but also the syntax of this verse is unique among those which describe the glory of Tyre and the extent of its trade (vv. 4-25) because it alone opens with a waw which is generally regarded as a copulative.

Commentators have suggested either eliminating weyawan and wedyan, or dropping only wedyan, reading weyayin instead of weyawan, and then connecting v. 19a with v. 18. Such a reading had already been presupposed by the Greek translation of Ezekiel, which reads xai olonv elis tav agorav sou edoxav ("and they brought wine into thy market"). Since Uzal is also listed as an offspring of Yoqtan, the eponym of south-west Arabian ethnic groups in the list of nations (Gen. x 27, 1 Chron. i 21), and since, according to a Jewish Yemenite tradition, Uzal had once been the name of San'a in the Yemen, Dan and Yawan have been placed by commentators in the Arabian peninsula. However, biblical, Assyrian and classical sources have never enumerated iron among the goods exported from Arabia, and not all aromatics were produced and imported from Arabia. Therefore, those identifications are doubtful.

Some time ago, A. R. Millard offered a new and original interpretation of this passage. His starting point too was that the opening waw is a copulative, and therefore wedyan weyawan mëuzaal is a continuation of v. 18, which describes Tyre's wine and wool imports from regions to its east. He suggested altering these words to wédanne yayin mëuzaal ("and casks of wine from Izalla"), and ending the whole verse 18-19a with the repeated phrase in the trading list (vv. 12-24) bēizbōnayik nātannu. But if this proposal were correct, the
second part of the sentence—"polished iron, cassia and calamus they trafficked with you"—would be left standing as an independent sentence without a mention of the place from which those wares were imported. Such a verse would be surprising in the trading list (vv. 12-24) because in all the other verses both the wares and their geographical source are enumerated, since the aim of this list is to illustrate the greatness of Tyre by the extent of its trade.

The sentence may contain an unusual syntactic structure and its introductory waw may be regarded as a waw of emphasis. A similar emphatic waw occurs in David’s lament on the deaths of Saul and Jonathan in 2 Sam. i 23. Here it stands in the middle of the sentence, which, according to the division of the verse by a Zaqeph by the Massoretes, starts with ʿābəmōṭām. Therefore the verse is to be translated: “Saul and Jonathan, beloved and cherished in their lives, even in their death (ʿābəmōṭām) were not parted ..." But, as J. C. Greenfield has suggested, we may also assume that the introducing waw is indeed a copulative and that the whole sentence is out of place and in the original was connected to v. 13, which is also concerned with import from Asia Minor: “Yavan, Tubal and Meshech—they are your merchants ... in human beings and copper utensils". Tubal-qain, the eponymous ancestor of Tubal, was regarded as “he who forged all implements of copper and iron” (Gen. iv 22). Tubal, in Assyrian Tabal, is a name of a country located in the south-western Cappadocia between the river Halys and the Taurus mountains, whose centre was located at the present Kaysery. According to Sargon’s inscription on his eighth campaign, the metal industry of this country was famous among the countries of the ancient Near East. Scholars have even suggested that the name Tabal was rendered from Sumerian TABIRA, which means “metal-smith". Meshech, usually mentioned in the Hebrew Bible together with Tubal, is the Assyrian Mushki, which bordered Tabal on its west and extended over a region rich in metal in the south-east of the Anatolian mountains. The high quality of Phrygian metal work is evident from findings at Gordion.

Slaves from the Anatolian Peninsula were required not only in Tyre, but also in Assyria. Many neo-Assyrian records deal with the sale of slaves, but in only two of them are the slaves classified by their ethnic origin. A business contract from Nineveh deals with the sale of a Tabalian slave by a merchant (ADD 197 = ARU 488), and, according to an unpublished document, a merchant sold in