
EZEKIEL 23: 1 the LORD's word came again to me, saying,

The idolatries of Samaria and Jerusalem are represented in this chapter by the bad practices of two common harlots, for which God denounces severe judgments against them, vv. 1-49. See the sixteenth chapter, where the same metaphor is enlarged upon as here, it being the prophets view to exude the utmost detestation of the crime against which he inveighs.

EZEKIEL 23: 2 Son of man, there were two women, the daughters of one mother:

Verse 2

Son of man, there were two women - All the Hebrews were derived from one source, Abraham and Sarah; and, till the schism under Rehoboam, formed but one people: but as these ten tribes and a half separated from Judah and Benjamin, they became two distinct people under different kings; called the kingdom of Judah, and the kingdom of Israel. They are called here, because of their consanguinity, two sisters. The elder, Samaria, (for there was the seat of government for the kingdom of Israel), was called אהלה *aholah*, "a tent." The younger, Judah, was called אהליבא *aholibah*, "my tent is in her," because the temple of God was in Jerusalem, the seat of the government of the kingdom of Judah.

EZEKIEL 23: 3 and they played the prostitute in Egypt; they played the prostitute in their youth; there were their breasts pressed, and there was handled the bosom of their virginity.

EZEKIEL 23: 4 Their names were Oholah the elder, and Oholibah her sister: and they became mine, and they bore sons and daughters. As for their names, Samaria is Oholah, and Jerusalem Oholibah.

EZEKIEL 23: 5 Oholah played the prostitute when she was mine; and she doted on her lovers, on the Assyrians her neighbours,

Verse 5

And Aholah played the harlot - Without entering into detail here, or following the figures, they both became idolatrous, and received the impure rites of the Egyptians, Assyrians, and Chaldeans, of which connection the prophet speaks here as he did in chap. 16, which see.

In this chapter there are many of what we would call indelicate expressions, because a parallel is run between idolatry and prostitution, and the circumstances of the latter illustrate the peculiarities of the former. In such cases, perhaps, the matter alone was given to the prophet, and he was left to use his own language, and amplify as he saw good. Ezekiel was among the Jews what Juvenal was among the Romans, - a rough reprovener of the most abominable vices. They both spoke of things as they found them; stripped vice naked, and scourged it publicly. The original is still more rough than the translation; and surely there is no need of a comment to explain imagery that is but too generally understood. I have said enough on Ezekiel 16, and to that I must refer the reader. It is true

that there are a few things here in the shade that might be illustrated by anatomy; and it would not be difficult to do it: but they are not necessary to salvation, and I shall not take off the covering. They were sufficiently understood by those for whose use they were originally designed.

EZEKIEL 23: 6 who were clothed with blue, governors and rulers, all of them desirable young men, horsemen riding on horses.

Verse 6

Clothed with blue - The purple dye was highly valued among the ancients, and at first was only used by kings, at last it was used among the military, particularly by officers of high rank in the country.

EZEKIEL 23: 7 She bestowed her prostitution on them, the choicest men of Assyria all of them; and on whoever she doted, with all their idols she defiled herself.

EZEKIEL 23: 8 Neither has she left her prostitution since leaving Egypt; for in her youth they lay with her, and they handled the bosom of her virginity; and they poured out their prostitution on her.

EZEKIEL 23: 9 Therefore I delivered her into the hand of her lovers, into the hand of the Assyrians, on whom she doted.

EZEKIEL 23: 10 These uncovered her nakedness; they took her sons and her daughters; and her they killed with the sword: and she became a byword among women; for they executed judgements on her.

EZEKIEL 23: 11 Her sister Oholibah saw this, yet was she more corrupt in her doting than she, and in her prostitution which were more than the prostitution of her sister.

EZEKIEL 23: 12 She doted on the Assyrians, governors and rulers, her neighbours, clothed most gorgeously, horsemen riding on horses, all of them desirable young men.

EZEKIEL 23: 13 I saw that she was defiled; they both took one way.

EZEKIEL 23: 14 She increased her prostitution; for she saw men portrayed on the wall, the images of the Chaldeans portrayed with vermilion,

Verse 14

Men portrayed upon the wall - See on Eze 8:10 (note).

EZEKIEL 23: 15 dressed with girdles on their waists, with flowing turbans on their heads, all of them princes to look on, after the likeness of the Babylonians in Chaldea, the land of their birth.

EZEKIEL 23: 16 As soon as she saw them she doted on them, and sent messengers to them into Chaldea.

EZEKIEL 23: 17 The Babylonians came to her into the bed of love, and they defiled her with their prostitution, and she was polluted with them, and her soul was alienated from them.

EZEKIEL 23: 18 So she uncovered her prostitution, and uncovered her nakedness: then my soul was alienated from her, like as my soul was alienated from her sister.

EZEKIEL 23: 19 Yet she multiplied her prostitution, remembering the days of her youth, in which she had played the prostitute in the land of Egypt.

EZEKIEL 23: 20 She doted on their paramours, whose flesh is as the flesh of donkeys, and whose issue is like the issue of horses.

Verse 20

She doted upon their paramours - פלגשיהם pillagsheyhem, their harlots or concubines. Anciently harlot meant in our language either the male or female prostitute.

Whose flesh is as the flesh of asses - See on Eze 16:25 (note).

EZEKIEL 23: 21 Thus you called to memory the lewdness of your youth, in the handling of your bosom by the Egyptians for the breasts of your youth.

EZEKIEL 23: 22 Therefore, Oholibah, thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will raise up your lovers against you, from whom your soul is alienated, and I will bring them against you on every side:

EZEKIEL 23: 23 the Babylonians and all the Chaldeans, Pekod, Shoa, Koa, and all the Assyrians with them; desirable young men, governors and rulers all of them, princes and men of renown, all of them riding on horses.

Verse 23

Pekod, and Shoa, and Koa - פקוד ושוע וקוע. These names have been thought to designate certain people bordering on the Chaldeans; but no geographer has ever been able to find them out.

In our old translations these names were considered appellatives - rulers, mighty men, and tyrants. Others, following the literal import of the words, have translated, visiting, shouting and retreating. Others have applied them to the habits of the Chaldean soldiers. Pekod signifying the muster or review of armies; Shoa, the magnificence of their uniform and arms; and Koa, the marks or embroidery of the clothes of the captains and generals. Grotius thought that they might be names of contiguous nations: Pekod, the Bactrians; Shoa, a people of Armenia; and Boa, the Medes. I have nothing to add that would satisfy myself, or be edifying to my readers.

EZEKIEL 23: 24 They shall come against you with weapons, chariots, and wagons, and with a company of peoples; they shall set themselves against you with buckler and shield and helmet all around; and I will commit the judgement to them, and they shall judge you according to their judgements.

EZEKIEL 23: 25 I will set my jealousy against you, and they shall deal with you in fury; they shall take away your nose and your ears; and your residue shall fall by the sword: they shall take your sons and your daughters; and your residue shall be devoured by the fire.

Verse 25

Shall take away thy nose - A punishment frequent among the Persians and Chaldeans, as ancient authors tell. Adulteries were punished in this way; and to this Martial refers: -

Quis tibi persuasit nares abscindere moecho? "Who has counselled thee to cut off the adulterer's nose?"

Women were thus treated in Egypt. See Calmet.

EZEKIEL 23: 26 They shall also strip you of your clothes, and take away your beautiful jewels.

Verse 26

They shall also strip thee - See on Eze 16:39 (note).

EZEKIEL 23: 27 Thus will I make your lewdness to cease from you, and your prostitution from the land of Egypt; so that you shall not lift up your eyes to them, nor remember Egypt any more.

EZEKIEL 23: 28 For thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will deliver you into the hand of them whom you hate, into the hand of them from whom your soul is alienated;

EZEKIEL 23: 29 and they shall deal with you in hatred, and shall take away all your labour, and shall leave you naked and bare; and the nakedness of your prostitution shall be uncovered, both your lewdness and your prostitution.

EZEKIEL 23: 30 These things shall be done to you, because you have played the prostitute after the nations, and because you are polluted with their idols.

EZEKIEL 23: 31 You have walked in the way of your sister; therefore will I give her cup into your hand.

EZEKIEL 23: 32 Thus says the Lord GOD: You will drink of your sister's cup, which is deep and large; you will be ridiculed and held in derision; it contains much.

Verse 32

Thou shalt drink of thy sister's cup - Thou shalt be ruined and desolated as Samaria was.

EZEKIEL 23: 33 You shall be filled with drunkenness and sorrow, with the cup of astonishment and desolation, with the cup of your sister Samaria.

EZEKIEL 23: 34 You shall even drink it and drain it out, and you shall gnaw the broken pieces of it, and shall tear your breasts; for I have spoken it, says the Lord GOD.

Verse 34

Thou shalt - pluck off thine own breasts - Thou shalt tear them; a frequent action in extreme sorrow and desolation. Weeping, tearing the bosom, and beating the breasts.

Tunc vero rupique sinus, et pectora planxi.

Ovid's Ep. 5.

EZEKIEL 23: 35 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Because you have forgotten me, and cast me behind your back, therefore you also bear your lewdness and your prostitution.

EZEKIEL 23: 36 The LORD said moreover to me: Son of man, will you judge Oholah and Oholibah? then declare to them their abominations.

EZEKIEL 23: 37 For they have committed adultery, and blood is in their hands; and with their idols have they committed adultery; and they have also caused their sons, whom they bore to me, to pass through the fire to them to be devoured.

EZEKIEL 23: 38 Moreover this they have done to me: they have defiled my sanctuary in the same day, and have profaned my Sabbaths.

Verse 38

They have defiled my sanctuary - By placing idols there.

EZEKIEL 23: 39 For when they had slain their children to their idols, then they came the same day into my sanctuary to profane it; and behold, thus have they done in the midst of my house.

EZEKIEL 23: 40 Furthermore you have sent for men who come from far, to whom a messenger was sent, and behold, they came; for whom you did wash yourself, paint your eyes, and decorate yourself with ornaments,

Verse 40

Thou didst wash thyself, paintedst thy eyes, and deckedst thyself with ornaments - This is exactly the way in which a loose female in Bengal adorns herself to receive guests. She first bathes, then rubs black paint around her eyes, and then covers her body with ornaments. - Ward's Customs.

EZEKIEL 23: 41 and sit on a stately bed, with a table prepared before it, whereupon you set my incense and my oil.

Verse 41

And satetest upon a stately bed - Hast raised a stately altar to thy idols; probably alluding to that which Ahaz ordered to be made, after the similitude of that which he saw at Damascus. The bed here is in allusion to the sofas on which the ancients were accustomed to recline at their meals; or to the couches on which they place Asiatic brides, with incense pots and sweetmeats on a table before them.

EZEKIEL 23: 42 The voice of a multitude being at ease was with her: and with men of the common sort were brought drunkards from the wilderness; and they put bracelets on their hands, and beautiful crowns on their heads.

Verse 42

And a voice of a multitude - This seems to be an account of an idolatrous festival, where a riotous multitude was assembled, and fellows of the baser sort, with bracelets on their arms and chapters on their heads, performed the religious rites.

EZEKIEL 23: 43 Then I said of her who was old in adulteries, Now they will play the prostitute with her, and she with them.

EZEKIEL 23: 44 They went in to her, as they go in to a prostitute: so went they in to Oholah and to Oholibah, the lewd women.

EZEKIEL 23: 45 Righteous men, they shall judge them with the judgement of adulteresses, and with the judgement of women who shed blood; because they are adulteresses, and blood is in their hands.

Verse 45

And the righteous men - אנשי צדיקים anashim tsaddikim. The Chaldeans, thus called because they are appointed by God to execute judgment on these criminals.

EZEKIEL 23: 46 For thus says the Lord GOD: I will bring up a company against them, and will give them to be tossed back and forth and robbed.

EZEKIEL 23: 47 The company shall stone them with stones, and dispatch them with their swords; they shall kill their sons and their daughters, and burn up their houses with fire.

Verse 47

Shall stone them with stones - As they did adulteresses under the law. See Lev 20:10; Deu 22:22, compared with Joh 8:3.

EZEKIEL 23: 48 Thus will I cause lewdness to cease out of the land, that all women may be taught not to do after your lewdness.

Verse 48

Thus will I cause lewdness to cease - Idolatry; and from that time to the present day the Jews never relapsed into idolatry.

EZEKIEL 23: 49 They shall recompense your lewdness on you, and you shall bear the sins of your idols; and you shall know that I am the Lord GOD.

Verse 49

Ye shall bear the sins of your idols - The punishment due to your adultery; your apostasy from God, and setting up idolatry in the land.