

CHAPTER 23

INTRODUCTION TO EZEKIEL 23

In this chapter the idolatries of Israel and Judah are represented under the metaphor of two harlots, and their lewdness. These harlots are described by their descent; by the place and time in which they committed their whoredoms; by their names, and which are explained, (³²³⁰Ezekiel 23:1-4), the idolatries of Israel, or the ten tribes, under the name of Aholah, which they committed with the Assyrians, and which they continued from the Egyptians, of whom they had learned them, are exposed, (³²³⁵Ezekiel 23:5-8), and their punishment for them is declared, (³²³⁹Ezekiel 23:9,10) then the idolatries of Judah, or the two tribes, under the name of Aholibah, are represented as greater than those of the ten tribes, (³²³¹Ezekiel 23:11), which they committed with the Assyrians, (³²³²Ezekiel 23:12), with the Chaldeans and Babylonians, (³²³³Ezekiel 23:13-18) in imitation of the Egyptians, reviving former idolatries learnt of them, (³²³⁹Ezekiel 23:19-21), wherefore they are threatened, that the Chaldeans, Babylonians, and Assyrians, should come against them, and spoil them, and carry them captive, (³²³²Ezekiel 23:22-35), and the prophet is bid to declare the abominable sin of them both, (³²³⁶Ezekiel 23:36-44), and to signify that they should be judged after the manner of adulteresses, should be stoned, and dispatched with swords, their sons and their daughters, and their houses burnt with fire; by which means their adulteries or idolatries should be made to cease, (³²³⁵Ezekiel 23:45-49).

Ver. 1. *The word of the Lord came unto me, &c.*] The word of prophecy, as the Targum; another prophecy, one upon the same subject, as in (³³⁶⁰Ezekiel 16:1),

saying; as follows:

Ver. 2. *Son of man, there were two women, &c.*] Or two nations and kingdoms, the kingdom of Israel or the ten tribes, and the kingdom of Judah or the two tribes. So the Targum,

“son of man, prophesy concerning two provinces, which are as two women:”

the daughters of one mother; either Sarah the wife of Abraham, from whom they sprung; or because they were originally one kingdom and nation; so they were when they came out of Egypt, and during the times of the judges, and in the reigns of David and Solomon; but became two in the days of Rehoboam the son of Solomon, from whom ten tribes revolted, and set up a separate kingdom, with Jeroboam at the head of it.

Ver. 3. *And they committed whoredoms in Egypt, &c.*] When they were but one body, one nation; and while they sojourned as strangers in that land they learned and practised the idolatries of it, (^{Q244}Joshua 24:14), and so the Targum,

“and they erred in Egypt, after the worship of their idols they erred, and there they corrupted their works:”

they committed whoredoms in their youth; as soon as they were come out of Egypt, and were formed into a political and ecclesiastical state, had the law of God given them, and promised obedience to him, and were espoused by him, which times are called the days of their youth and espousal, (^{Q210}Jeremiah 2:2 ^{Q215}Hosea 2:15), and then were they guilty of whoredom, or spiritual adultery, which idolatry, in making and worshipping the golden calf, after the manner of Egypt; and in joining themselves to Baalpeor, the god of the Moabites, (^{Q231}Exodus 32:1-4 ^{Q252}Numbers 25:2,3);

there were their breasts pressed, there they bruised the teats of their virginity; that is, the Egyptians, who drew them into idolatry, and with whom they committed it; which is expressed by the actions of adulterous persons, suggesting that, before this, they were as chaste and pure virgins to God, adhered to his worship, and served him only, and were not defiled with the superstition and idolatry of the Heathens: or, “they made^{f343} the teats or paps of their virginity”; that is, made them swell and increase, being impregnated by them, and their idolatry completed; or to move and heave being pressed.

Ver. 4. *And the names of them were Aholah the elder, &c.*] Or, “the greater”^{f344} meaning the ten tribes of Israel, which were more in number than Judah, and greater in power and riches; their name, Aholah, signifies “her tent or tabernacle”, which was entirely their own, and not the Lord’s: their worship, and places of worship, were of their own appointing, namely, their calves at Daniel and Bethel; God had nothing to do with

them, there he did not dwell; his tabernacle was not there, that was at Salem, (^{<970>}Psalm 76:1):

and Aholibah her sister; which name signifies “my tent or tabernacle is in her”: this is the name of Judah or the two tribes, in which stood the temple of the Lord, where he was worshipped, and where he dwelt: some think these were proper names of two Egyptian harlots; others think there is allusion to the wife of Esau, (^{<036>}Genesis 36:2):

and they were mine; or, “I had them^{f345}”; when they were together; they were originally espoused unto him; he avouched them to be his people, and they avouched him to be their God; he chose them for himself above all other people, and they professed themselves to be his, and promised to serve and worship him; and for a while did continue in his service and worship: and they bare sons and daughters; to the Lord, whom they brought up in the fear of God, and taught them to serve him: the phrase is expressive of their increase, and of their happiness and prosperity, while they adhered to the pure worship of God:

thus were their names; this is the application of them: “Samaria is Aholah”; or Aholah signifies Samaria, which was the metropolis of Ephraim, and belonged to the ten tribes, and is put for the whole, (^{<200>}Isaiah 7:9): “and Jerusalem Aholibah”; or Aholibah designs Jerusalem, the head city of Judah, and stands for the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin.

Ver. 5. *And Aholah played the harlot when she was mine, &c.*] His married wife, and so ought to have cleaved to him alone: or, under me^{f346}; under his cover, power, and protection, and therefore it was their interest to serve him only: or, “instead of me”^{f347}; or, as the Syriac version, “besides me”: they worshipped other gods in the room of the true God, or other gods besides him. The Targum is,

“and Aholah erred from my worship;”

the ten tribes fell into idolatry, when they were God’s professing people:

and she doted on her lovers; whom she loved even to madness; she was mad with love, to the idols, temples, altars, and idolatrous worship of the Heathens; particularly doted “on the Assyrians her neighbours”; who were become so by the conquest of Syria; and these they treated as their neighbours, and sought to have them to be their allies and confederates; courted their help and assistance, and gave them much money for that

purpose; as Menahem gave to Pul king of Assyria a thousand talents of silver, to confirm the kingdom in his hand, (⁴²⁵⁹2 Kings 15:19).

Ver. 6. *Which were clothed with blue*, &c.] A colour the Assyrians were fond of, and clothed their soldiers in, and was taking to the eye; and is mentioned, because that men, finely clothed find beautifully arrayed, are more engaging to women, who are fond of dress:

captains and rulers; men of power and authority in military and civil affairs, either in the camp, or in the court; officers either in the army, or in the king's palace; and which was a recommendation of them:

desirable young men; for their youth, strength, beauty, and honourable employments and offices:

horsemen riding upon horses: of which there was a scarcity in Judea; wherefore such were the more desirable to them, as appearing more grand, and being more serviceable and helpful to them.

Ver. 7. *Thus she committed her whoredoms with them*, &c.] Entered into alliance with them, and joined them in their idolatrous worship:

with all them that were the chosen men of Assyria; before described by their habit, office, and age:

and with all on whom she doted; had an insatiable desire and lust after:

with all their idols she defiled herself; worshipped all the idols the Assyrians did; and which were defiling, as they must needs be, since, as the word used signifies, they were dunghill gods.

Ver. 8. *Neither left she her idols brought from Egypt*, &c.] Though the Israelites took in the gods of the Assyrians into their worship, they did not relinquish the golden calves set up at Daniel and Bethel, in imitation of the Egyptian deities; the idolatrous worship of which they learned in Egypt, and brought from thence:

for in her youth they lay with her; the Egyptians enticed the Israelites to idolatry when among them, as soon as they began to be a people; (see Gill on "^{263B}Ezekiel 23:3"):)

and they bruised the breasts of her virginity; who before retained the pure worship of God, and was like a chaste virgin:

and poured their whoredom upon her; expressive of the numerous acts of idolatry committed together by them.

Ver. 9. *Wherefore I have delivered her into the hand of her lovers, &c.*] To destruction; their persons, families, riches, and kingdom itself:

into the hand of the Assyrians, on whom she doted; first into the hands of Pul, then Tiglathpileser, then Shalmaneser, all kings of Assyria, by whom they were spoiled or carried captive; by the two first in part, by the last wholly; (see ^{<D159>}2 Kings 15:19,29 17:5-18).

Ver. 10. *These discovered her wickedness, &c.*] That is, stripped them of all their substance:

they took her sons and her daughters; and carried them captive:

and slew her with the sword; put an end to the kingdom of Israel, or the ten tribes, and which was never recovered to this day:

and she became famous among women; or among the provinces, as the Targum; she became famous, or rather infamous, among other nations; was talked of for her sins, her whoredoms and idolatries, and the vengeance of God upon her for them; she became a byword and a proverb among the kingdoms of the world for her wickedness and her destruction:

for they had executed judgment upon her; that is, the Assyrians, who were the instruments in God's hand in doing justice to her, and inflicting his judgments on her, and for that she became famous.

Ver. 11. *And when her sister Aholibah saw this, &c.*] The two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, when, they saw the idolatries the ten tribes fell into, and the destruction which came upon them for the same; instead of receiving instruction, and taking caution by all this,

she was more corrupt in her inordinate love than she; in courting the friendship, alliance, and help of their Heathen neighbours:

and in her whoredoms more than her sister in her whoredoms; guilty of more idolatries than the ten tribes, as in the times of Manasseh; (see ^{<H128>}Jeremiah 2:28).

Ver. 12. *She doted upon the Assyrians her neighbours, &c.*] As in the times of Ahaz, who sent to Tiglathpileser, king of Assyria, for help; and

from whence he took the pattern of an altar, and had one built like it at Jerusalem, and offered upon it, (^{<2167>}2 Kings 16:7-12),

captains and rulers clothed most gorgeously; or “perfectly”,^{f348}; with all kind of precious garments, and of all manner of colours; not with blue only, but purple, scarlet, crimson, &c.

horsemen riding upon horses, all of them desirable young men; (see Gill on “^{<2316>}Ezekiel 23:6”).

Ver. 13. *Then I saw that she was defiled*, &c.] With idols, and the worship of them, (^{<2317>}Ezekiel 23:7):

that they took both one way; the same way of idolatry; worshipped the same idols, lived the same course of life, were guilty of the same sin, both Israel and Judah.

Ver. 14. *And that she increased her whoredoms*, &c.] Added to the number of her idols, increased her idols, and even was guilty of more than her sister:

for when she saw men portrayed on the wall; of the temple, as idols were, (^{<2380>}Ezekiel 8:10) or upon the wall of a private house, where they were worshipped as household gods:

the images of the Chaldeans portrayed with vermilion: the images of their heroes, who after death were deified; and these, being drawn upon the wall with vermilion, which, being mixed with ceruse, made a flesh colour, were worshipped; as Bel, Nebo, Merodach, which are names of their idols, (^{<2341>}Isaiah 46:1 ^{<2402>}Jeremiah 1:2) or these were graven on the walls, or etched out upon them with minium or red lead; or rather were “painted”,^{f349} as some render the word, with minium, vermilion, or cinnabar, which are the same; (see Gill on “^{<2214>}Jeremiah 22:14”), and it may be observed, that it was usual with the Heathens to paint the images and statues of their gods with these. Thus Virgil^{f350} represents Pan, the god of Arcadia, coloured red with minium or vermilion; and Pausanius^{f351} speaks of the statue of Bacchus being besmeared with cinnabar: and Pliny^{f352} says the face of the image of Jupiter used to be anointed with minium or vermilion on festival days; and observes, that the nobles of Ethiopia used to colour themselves all over with it; this being the colour of the images of their gods, which they reckoned more august, majestic, and sacred. Hence the Romans, in their triumphs, used to paint themselves with

vermilion; particularly it is said of Augustus Caesar, that he did this to make himself the more conspicuous and respectable, after the example of the Assyrians and Medes^{f353}: and the triumphers chose to be rubbed all over with a red colour, that they might, according to Isidore^{f354}, resemble the divine fire.

Ver. 15. *Girded with girdles upon their loins*, &c.] As a token of dignity and authority; (see ^{<23116>}Isaiah 11:5), which was the peculiar custom of the Babylonians, as Kimchi, from the Talmudists, observes: “exceeding in dyed attire upon their heads”; having turbans of various colours upon their heads, after the manner of the Persians:

all of them princes to look to; bore the resemblance of kings, princes, and the great men of the earth, and whose images indeed they were; even of such who in their lifetime were famous for military exploits, or for some excellency or another, either real or pretended, and after death reckoned among the gods, and worshipped:

after the manner of the Babylonians of Chaldea, the land of their nativity; either where these heroes were born whose images were portrayed; or where Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation, was born, and so called from thence the land of their nativity; putting them in mind of their original, and of the idolatries of their ancestors, which they were now returning to.

Ver. 16. *And as soon as she saw them with her eyes, she doted upon them*, &c.] As lustful women, on the sight of the pictures of men, fall in love with them, and are mad after them; such a vehement desire after the idols of the Chaldeans prevailed, upon seeing their images:

and sent messengers unto them in Chaldea; to make alliances with the Chaldeans, and to have their idols, and worship them.

Ver. 17. *And the Babylonians came to her in the bed of love*, &c.] Entered into alliance with the Jews, and worshipped together in the same idols’ temple. Jarchi thinks this refers to the messengers of the king of Babylon to Hezekiah; who were gladly received by him, and to whom he showed all the treasures of his house:

and they defiled her with their whoredom; or with their idols, as the Targum; they drew them into their idolatrous practices; which were defiling them, and by which they were corrupted from the simplicity of the true worship of God:

and she was polluted with them, and her mind was alienated from them: or “plucked”, or “disjoined from them”^{f355}; the Chaldeans, broke league and covenant with them, hating them as much as before they doted upon them; this was done in the times of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah, who rebelled against the king of Babylon, (^{<1230>}2 Kings 24:1,20) as it often is the case with lewd women, when they have satisfied their lust with their gallants, loath and despise them, and cast them off.

Ver. 18. *So she discovered her whoredoms, and discovered her nakedness,* &c.] The Jews did not cease from their idolatries when they broke with the Babylonians; but were rather more frequent and impudent in them, and courted the friendship and alliance of other Heathen nations, and their worship; even as a lewd woman, when she has cast off her former lovers, does not leave her lewdness, but seeks after others; and by her impudence in discovering her whoredoms, and her nakedness, and by all the signs of a prostitute, draws in others to commit lewdness with her:

then my mind was alienated from her, like as my mind was alienated from her sister; as a virtuous husband is alienated from an adulterous wife, and cannot admit her to his bed and board, so the mind of the Lord was alienated from the Jews, because of their idolatries; nor could he favour them with his presence, and the blessings of his providence and goodness, as he had formerly done; even as his mind had been alienated, on the same account, from the ten tribes of Israel, and which he showed by suffering them to be carried captive.

Ver. 19. *Yet she multiplied her whoredoms,* &c.] Though the Lord frowned upon the Jews in the times of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah, yet still they went on, and increased their alliances and idolatries with the Heathen nations:

in calling to remembrance the days of her youth, wherein she had played the harlot in the land of Egypt; they called to mind with pleasure the idolatries of their fathers in Egypt, and committed the same themselves; they sent ambassadors to Egypt, in the times of Zedekiah, for help and assistance, and to enter into alliance with them, when they renewed among them the idolatries of that nation; (see ^{<26715>}Ezekiel 17:15).

Ver. 20. *For she doted upon their paramours,* &c.] Or “concubines”^{f356}; the neighbouring nations and allies of the Egyptians, whose friendship the

Jews courted, and whose idols they served: the Septuagint and Arabic versions wrongly read the Chaldeans:

whose flesh is as the flesh of asses, and whose issue is like the issue of horses; by “flesh” is meant the “membrum virile”, which in asses is very large, and therefore dedicated to Priapus by the Heathens; and vast is the profusion of seed in coitus by horses, to which the flesh and issue of the Egyptian paramours are compared; who were very libidinous, and therefore desirable to insatiable women; all which serves to express the eagerness of the people of the Jews after idolatry.

Ver. 21. *Thus thou calledst to remembrance the lewdness of thy youth, &c.]* By committing the same; the same idolatries their fathers committed in Egypt they now committed, being in alliance with the same people: or, *thou causest to be visited the lewdness of thy youth*^{f357}; by the Lord, who remembered their sins, and punished them for them:

in bruising thy teats by the Egyptians for the paps of thy youth: committing spiritual fornication, that is, idolatry with them; signified by pressing and bruising the breasts and paps of virgins, by corporeal fornication with them.

Ver. 22. *Therefore, O Aholibah, thus saith the Lord God, &c.]* Or, ye two tribes of Benjamin and Judah, hear what the Lord says unto you:

behold, I will raise up thy lovers against thee; the Chaldeans, whom they had formerly loved, and in whose alliance they were, and whose idols they worshipped:

from whom thy mind is alienated; having broke covenant with them, and cast off their yoke, and rebelled against them:

and I will bring them against thee on every side; to besiege and encompass Jerusalem on every side with their army, as they did, so that there was no escaping.

Ver. 23. *The Babylonians, and all the Chaldeans, &c.]* Both the inhabitants of the city of Babylon, called in the Hebrew text the children of Babylon, and all the inhabitants of the several parts of the country of Chaldean, of which Babylon was the metropolis:

Pekod, and Shoa, and Koa; the Vulgate Latin version, and so Jerom, take these words to be appellatives, and render them noblemen, tyrants, and princes; as some mentioned by Jarchi do, governors, princes, and rulers; and Kimchi^{f358} thinks they are the titles of the Babylonian princes spoken of in Jeremiah, as Nebuzaradan, Nebushasban, Rabsaris, Rabmag, &c. (^{249B}Jeremiah 39:3,13), but with others they are the proper names of persons or places: and so the Targum calls them, Pekodaites, Shoaites, and Koaites; that is, the inhabitants of places so called; and certain it is that Pekod was a province of Babylon, (^{249D}Jeremiah 50:21): which, according to Junius, lay between the two rivers Tigris and Lycus, and in which was the famous city of Nineveh; and, according to him, Shoa, or the Shoaites, lay between the rivers Lycus and Gorgus, among where were the Adiabeni, and the town called Siai by Ptolemy; and the Koaites were situated in the inward part of Assyria, by Arbelitis, where formerly was the fortified town of Koah, by historians called Gauga; and by Strabo Gaugamela. Grotius thinks that Pekod are the Bactriani; and that Shoa is Siai in Armenia with Ptolemy; and that Koa is Choana of Media, with the same Ptolemy; but, be they who they will, they were such people as were to come with the Chaldean army against the Jews:

and all the Assyrians with them: which were now one people with the Chaldeans and Babylonians, by whom formerly the ten tribes were carried captive:

all of them desirable young men, captains and rulers, great lords and renowned, all of them riding upon horses; persons of high rank and dignity, in chief offices at court or in the camp, all in the bloom and strength of youth; men of name and renown for their honour and valour; and all well mounted, a famous cavalry of them; and who before were lovely on these accounts, when they were their gallants and lovers, their confederates and allies, but now formidable and terrible being their enemies; (see ^{252B}Ezekiel 23:5,6,12).

Ver. 24. *And they shall come against thee with chariots, wagons, and wheels, &c.*] With “chariots”, in which were their princes and great men, their chief commanders, generals, and captains, and in which they fought, as was usual in those times; and with “wagons”, to carry their provisions and warlike stores; and with “wheels”, that is, either with chariots and wagons that ran upon wheels, or with wheels for them in case they should break down; the first of these words here, according to some Jewish

interpreters, as Donesh in Jarchi, signifies warlike instruments in general; and the second word is used for chariots: and so the whole is paraphrased by the Targum,

“and they shall come against thee with instruments of war, with chariots and wheels;”

all which denotes how well prepared they should be, and with what swiftness they would come:

and with an assembly of people, which shall set against thee buckler, and shield, and helmet, round about; a multitude of people, a vast army gathered out of all the provinces of Babylon, having bucklers and shields about their bodies, and helmets on their heads to protect and defend them; and these should surround the city of Jerusalem. So the Targum, “an army of people, armed with shields and helmets, shall set themselves against thee round about:”

and I will set judgment before them, and they shall judge thee according to their judgments; that is, I will deliver you into their hands, and they shall judge and condemn you; not according to my laws and yours, but according to their own laws, according to the customs and usages among them, according to the law of nations; they shall deal with you as rebels and covenant breakers, such Zedekiah was; he broke covenant with the king of Babylon, and rebelled against him: and this was fulfilled when he fell into his hands, and when he slew his children before his face, and then put out his eyes.

Ver. 25. *And I will set my jealousy against thee, and they shall deal furiously with thee, &c.]* As a jealous husband, enraged against his adulterous wife, falls upon her in his fury, and uses her with great severity; so the Jews having committed spiritual fornication, that is, idolatry, and departed from the Lord, he threatens to stir up the fury of his jealousy, and punish them severely by the Chaldeans, as follows:

they shall take away thy nose and thine ears, and thy remnant shall fall by the sword; as gallants use their harlots when they leave them, or jealous husbands their adulterous wives, disfiguring them, that they may be marked and known what they are, and be despised by others; and as has been the custom in some countries, particularly with the Egyptians, to cut off the noses of adulterous persons; here it is to be understood figuratively: by the “nose”, according to Jarchi, Kimchi, and Ben Melech, is meant the king,

who is higher than his people, as the nose is the highest part in a man's face; and by the "ears" the priest, who caused a noise to be heard when he entered into the temple with his bells; or rather because it was the priest's office to attend to the word of God, and teach it the people; in general, these denote everything that was excellent among the Jews, their city, temple, king, kingdom, princes, priests, and prophets, which should be demolished and removed; and by the remnant is meant the common people, that should come into the hands of the Chaldeans, and fall by their sword. So the Targum paraphrases it,

"thy princes and thy nobles shall go into captivity, and thy people shall be killed with the sword:"

they shall take thy sons and thy daughters, and thy residue shall be devoured by the fire; take and carry their sons and daughters captive, and burn with fire the city left by them. Thus the Targum,

"they shall carry thy sons and daughters captive, and the beauty of thy land shall be burnt with fire;"

that is, the city of Jerusalem, the temple, the king's palaces, the houses of the great men, and others in it, which were all burnt with fire when taken by the Chaldeans, (~~2613~~ Jeremiah 52:13).

Ver. 26. *They shall also strip thee out of thy clothes,* &c.] As such who are taken captives are usually served:

and take away, thy fair jewels; their ornaments of every kind: or "the vessels of thy glory"^{f359}; Kimchi observes this may be meant either of the garments of the priests, and the vessels of the sanctuary; or of whole spoil of the city in general, whether in the temple, or in other houses.

Ver. 27. *Thus will I make thy lewdness to cease from thee,* &c.] That is, their idolatry; for, after this captivity, the Jews never were guilty of idolatry any more:

and thy whoredom brought from the land of Egypt; the idolatry which they learned there, and brought from thence; so the Targum,

"the worship of thine idols, which was with thee when thou wast in the land of Egypt:"

so that thou shall not lift up thine eyes unto them; to the idols of Egypt, to pray unto them, and worship them:

nor remember Egypt any more; with any delight and pleasure, and so as to desire an alliance with them, and help from them, or to join with them in their idolatries: so the Targum,

“and the idols of the Egyptians thou shalt remember no more.”

Ver. 28. *For thus saith the Lord God, I will deliver thee into the hand of them whom thou hatest*, &c.] The Chaldeans and Babylonians, before loved by her, and doted upon, but now hated and rebelled against; and to fall into such hands must be a sore judgment; and this the Lord threatens to bring upon the Jews for their sins; and he having said it, it might be depended upon it would be performed; and, for the greater certainty of it, it is repeated in different words:

into the hand of them from whom thy mind is alienated; (see Gill on “³²³¹⁷Ezekiel 23:17”).

Ver. 29. *And they shall deal with thee hatefully*, &c.] The Chaldeans should hate the Jews as much as before they loved them, when they came into the bed of love to them, (³²³¹⁷Ezekiel 23:17) and as much as the Jews hated them; which they showed by their severe and rigorous usage of them, putting some to the sword, carrying the rest captive, and employing them in hard service and labour; and, which is still worse, and an aggravation of all this:

and shall take away all thy labour; whatever they got by labour, that they should not enjoy, but should be taken away from them:

and shall leave thee naked and bare: stripped of all the necessaries and conveniences of life:

and the nakedness of thy whoredoms shall be discovered, both thy lewdness and thy whoredoms; it shall then be manifest to all that thou hast been guilty of idolatry, and hast departed from the Lord thy God, which has caused him to bring these judgments upon thee for thy sins. The Targum paraphrases the latter part of the clause thus,

“the sins of thy wicked counsels, and thy pride.”

It seems to be a heap of words, to express the grossness of their idolatries, which now should be exposed.

Ver. 30. *And I will do these things unto thee, &c.*] What the Chaldeans did God is said to do, because he suffered them to do these things, as a punishment for their sins; yea, it was according to his will, and by his orders. The Septuagint and Vulgate Latin versions render it, “they have done these things unto thee”; that is, the Chaldeans. The Targum is,

“thy sins are the cause of these things unto thee;”

that is, their idolatry and other iniquities. Hence the Syriac version is very particular,

“for thy whoredoms these things shall be done unto thee;”

and the Arabic version,

“thy whoredom hath done (or is the cause of) these things unto thee,”

as follows:

because thou hast gone a whoring after the Heathen, and because thou art polluted with their idols; imitated them in their idolatries; worshipped the same dunghill gods as they did, as the word signifies; with which it was no wonder they should be polluted, and become abominable unto God.

Ver. 31. *Thou hast walked in the way of thy sister, &c.*] Samaria, or the ten tribes of Israel; followed them in their idolatrous practices, were guilty of the same:

therefore will I give her cup into thine hand; the cup of her vengeance, as the Targum; inflict the same punishment on the two tribes as on the ten, and suffer them to be carried captive as they had been.

Ver. 32. *Thus saith the Lord God, thou shall drink of thy sister’s cup deep and large, &c.*] That is, partake of the same punishment, which was very great, signified by a deep and large cup, which holds much:

thou shall be laughed to scorn, and had in derision; by the nations round about, who, instead of pitying them under their troubles, will rejoice at them; just as drunken men are laughed at, when intoxicated and reeling about:

it containeth much; the cup of wrath and vengeance; as much as will last severity years drinking. The Targum connects this with the preceding clause,

“and thou shalt be for derision and for laughter, because of the greatness of the tribulation that shall come upon thee.”

Ver. 33. *Thou shalt be filled with drunkenness and sorrow*, &c.] Sorrow is the effect of drunkenness; these two generally go together; when a man is filled with the one, he is with the other; this expresses the greatness of the sorrow and distress of the Jews in captivity:

with the cup of astonishment and desolation; their punishment would be so great, and their condition be so desolate, that it should astonish them, and bereave them of their senses; and they should be like mad men, as their actions in the following verse show:

with the cup of thy sister Samaria; the same punishment as inflicted on the ten tribes.

Ver. 34. *Thou shalt even drink it, and suck it out*, &c.] The very dregs of it, that which lies at the bottom, which is the most nauseous and the most pernicious; not through love to it, but through force, shall be obliged to it; (see ^{<1978>}Psalm 75:8):

and thou shall break the sherds thereof; and suck them, so that not a drop of the liquor shall be lost; even what has penetrated into the earthen vessel, which this cup is supposed to be; and therefore it shall be broken to pieces, and these pieces sucked, that all may be got out; suggesting that there will be no abatement of the punishment, it shall be endured to the utmost: or it may be an allusion to drunkards, who, having drunk up their liquor, and become drunk, break their glasses, pots, and cups, and to which the next clause agrees:

and pluck off thine own breasts; as men in their drunken fits, being like mad men, tear their own flesh; and so the Targum paraphrases it,

“thou shall tear thy flesh;”

so the Jews, under punishment for sin, and pressed with the guilt of it, through indignation at themselves should tear their flesh, and particularly pluck off their breasts: the allusion is to fornication, to which idolatry is compared, in which those parts are particularly affected; (see ^{<1920>}Ezekiel

23:21), the Syriac version renders this and the former clause thus, “thou shall shave thine hair and cut off thy breasts”; Kimchi thinks by the “breasts” are meant the oral and written laws, which ceased in the time of the captivity; but without any foundation:

for I have spoken it, saith the Lord; and therefore it shall be done.

Ver. 35. *Therefore thus saith the Lord God, because thou hast forgotten me, &c.*] His word, worship, and ordinances, and did not attend unto them, but worshipped strange gods: so the Targum,

“because thou hast left my worship:”

and cast me behind thy back; or, as the same paraphrase,

“hast cast the fear of me from before thine eyes;”

or out of thy sight, his laws and statutes; (see ^{<4612>}Nehemiah 9:26 ^{<2153>}Isaiah 5:24), as men cast behind their backs that which they have no value for and loath, and which they do not care to see, and choose to forget:

therefore bear thou also thy lewdness and thy whoredoms; that is, the guilt of their sins, the punishment of their idolatries, and shame and confusion for them.

Ver. 36. *The Lord said moreover unto me, son of man, wilt thou judge Aholah and Aholibah? &c.*] Plead the cause of Israel and Judah? say any thing in their defence, and in excuse of them? or intercede and pray for them, that threatened judgments may not come upon them? no, do nothing of this kind; if thou wilt do anything, do as follows:

yea, declare unto them their abominations; their abominable sins, their murders, adulteries, and idolatries; set them in a true light before them, in all their aggravated circumstances; that, if it can be, they may be brought to a true sight and sense of them, to repent of them, be ashamed of them, loath them, confess them, and forsake them.

Ver. 37. *That they have committed adultery, &c.*] Either literally, adultery with their neighbours’ wives, which was a prevailing sin with this people; or figuratively, spiritual adultery, that is, idolatry:

and blood is in their hands; the Targum is,

“they have shed the blood of innocents with their hands;”

the blood of prophets and righteous men, sent unto them; and the blood of their infants in sacrificing to idols, as after mentioned:

and with their idols have they committed adultery; by worshipping them, which is spiritual adultery; and this being so explicitly mentioned, it seems to be distinguished from corporeal adultery in the first clause, which may be only there designed; and so Kimchi thinks:

and have also caused their sons, whom they bare unto me, to pass for them through the fire, to devour them; their children, who were the Lord's by national adoption, and who ought to have been trained up in the worship and service of God, were, in a most barbarous and unnatural manner, caused to pass through the fire, for or to the idols Molech and Baal; and that not merely by way of lustration and dedication, which was sometimes done by passing between two fires, but so as to be devoured and destroyed by the fire.

Ver. 38. *Moreover this they have done unto me*, &c.]. The following piece of wickedness, which was very provoking to the Lord:

they have defiled my sanctuary in the same day; as they caused their children to pass through the fire to their idols, by entering into the sanctuary when they had so done, and were thus defiled, and by offering sacrifices to their idols in it; or under pretence of serving the Lord, when they had just been guilty of murder and idolatry:

and have profaned my sabbaths; not only by doing their own worldly and civil business, but by slaying their infants on those days, and sacrificing them to idols.

Ver. 39. *For when they had slain their children to their idols*, &c.]. This explains more clearly what is before said, that by causing their children to pass through the fire was a slaying them; and that their passing through it "for them" was for their idols, and unto them; (see ⁴⁶³⁷Ezekiel 23:37), and how when they had been guilty of such shocking wickedness,

then they came the same day into my sanctuary to profane it; not that they came into the temple on purpose to profane it; but coming into it, being themselves defiled with the murder of their infants, and offering sacrifices to idols, or performing a hypocritical service to the Lord, this was in the event a profanation of the sanctuary:

and, lo, thus they have done in the midst of mine house; set up idols there, and worshipped them; as they did in the temple itself, in the times of Ahaz and Manasseh; (see ^{<2470>}Jeremiah 7:30).

Ver. 40. *And furthermore, that ye have sent for men to come from far,* &c.] From Egypt, Assyria, and Chaldea, to treat with them, and enter into alliances and confederacies with them, and to join them in their idolatrous practices; these Heathen nations did not send to the Jews, but the Jews to them; they did not court their friendship and alliance, but the Jews courted theirs:

unto whom a messenger was sent; to court their favour, and solicit a confederacy, and to desire that ambassadors might be sent to reside among them:

and, lo, they came; these Heathen courts listened to the proposal, and accordingly sent their plenipotentiaries and ambassadors to them, who came in their masters' name, and with their credentials; and for the reception of whom great preparations were made, as follows:

for whom thou didst wash thyself, paintedst thy eyes, and deckedst thyself with ornaments; just as harlots do to make themselves agreeable to their lovers; who use washes and paint, as Jezebel did, and dress themselves in their best clothes, and adorn themselves in the best manner they can. Harlots had their particular attire, by which they were known, (^{<2470>}Proverbs 7:10) and they not only used bagnios or baths, but washes for their face, to make them look beautiful; and particularly painted their eyes, to make them look larger; for large eyes in women, in some nations, were reckoned very handsome, particularly among the Greeks: hence Juno, in Homer^{f360}, is called βουπις the ox eyed, as some translate it; or rather the large eyed Juno: and the Grecian women, in order to make their eyes large, made use of a powder mixed with their washes, which shrunk their eyebrows, and caused their eyes to stand out, and look fuller and larger; and such was the paint which Pliny,^{f361} calls stibium, and says, it was by some named “platyophthalmon”, because in the beautiful eyebrows of women it dilated the eyes; and it seems that painting with something of this nature was used by the Jewish women, in imitation of the Heathens, for the same purpose, especially by harlots; hence the phrase of rending the face, or rather the eyes, with paint, (^{<2483>}Jeremiah 4:30), so the Moorish women now, as Dr. Shaw^{f362} relates, to add a gracefulness to their complexions, tinge their eye lids with “alkahol”, the powder of lead ore; and this is performed by first

dipping into this powder a small wooden bodkin, of the thickness of a quill, and then drawing it afterwards through the eyelids, over the ball of the eye; and which is properly a rending the eyes indeed, as the prophet calls it, with powder of “pouk”, or lead ore: so, for the gratifying these idolatrous ambassadors, idols were set up, altars built, and sacrifices prepared; and, in order to their public entry, and to show how acceptable they were, palaces were fitted up for them; and the streets through which they passed decorated, and all public marks of esteem and affection given them; to this the Targum seems to have respect, paraphrasing the words thus,

“and, lo, they came to the place thou hadst prepared; thou hast adorned the streets, and appointed palaces.”

Ver. 41. *And satest upon a stately bed*, &c.] Or honourable^{f363}, a bed of state: either a throne, a royal seat under a canopy, on which the king of Judah sat to receive foreign ambassadors; or a stately bed at a feast, made for the entertainment of them; it being usual in the eastern nations to sit on beds at eating, to which the next clause agrees. The allusion is to a harlot sitting on a bed decked out by her to allure men to lie with her; (see ^{<1076>}Proverbs 7:16):

and a table prepared before it; before the bed, furnished with the richest provisions to treat the ambassadors with; or this may design an altar built for them to offer on it sacrifices to their idols, according to the customs of their countries:

whereupon thou hast set mine incense and mine oil; which were the gifts of God to this people, and which they should have used in his service; but with these they treated the ministers of Heathen princes; scenting the room where they were entertained with incense, and anointing their heads and feet with oil, for their pleasure and refreshment; or they offered these on the altars of the idols to them.

Ver. 42. *And a voice of a multitude being at ease was with her*, &c.] With Aholibah, with the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin: or, “in her”, in Jerusalem; or “in it”, or “about it”^{f364}; the bed, or table, or both: these were either the people of the many nations that came in great numbers with the ambassadors, as their retinue, and for the greater splendour of them; and who came, not to make war, but in a peaceable way, being invited to come; or these were a confluence of the Jewish people, who came from all parts to see the public entry of these ambassadors; who were quite easy with it,

since they came as the ambassadors of their allies and friends, in whose alliance they thought themselves safe and happy; and therefore welcomed them with their loud huzzas:

and with the men of the common sort were brought Sabeans from the wilderness; or, “and with men because of a multitude of men”^{f365}; that is, with those men that came from several parts on this occasion, for the sake of a greater number, and of making a greater appearance, the Sabeans that dwelt in the desert of Arabia were fetched from thence; or their neighbours round about Moab and Ammon, that dwelt in the wilderness, were sent for, and brought to make the solemnity the greater; so Jarchi; and to this sense the Targum renders it,

“because of the multitude of men that came round about on every side from the wilderness,”

Some render it, “drunkards from the wilderness”^{f366}; a parcel of drunken fellows that lived in the wilderness, rustic, brutish, people; these were brought as fit persons to drink healths, and roar on this occasion:

which put bracelets upon their hands, and beautiful crowns upon their heads; that is, the Jews put these ornaments upon the hands and heads of these men of the common sort, and the Sabeans with them, and these poor country drunken fellows too, that they might make the better appearance when they met and huzzaed the ambassadors at their entry; or which Sabeans and other foreigners put these ornaments on Aholah and Aholibah, and enticed them to the worship of their idols, and taught them idolatry.

Ver. 43. *Then said I unto her that was old in adulteries, &c.*] That had been an old adulterer or idolater; meaning either Aholah the ten tribes, who from Jeroboam’s time had been guilty of idolatry; or Aholibah the two tribes, who had remained longer in their own country, and had been long given to idolatry; or both of them, as some think, the whole body of the people of Israel, who had been addicted to idolatry ever since they came out of Egypt, and so was like an old harlot indeed: now the Lord said “unto her”, or “concerning her”^{f367}; in his own mind, after the manner of men. So the Targum,

“I said concerning the congregation of Israel, whose people are old in sins:”

will they now commit whoredoms with her, and she with them? will they commit adultery with such an old harlot? are they not weary of her? and will they not rather loath and despise her? as it is common when such prostitutes grow old; and what pleasure can she take, thus advanced in years, in such impurities? suggesting that alliances and confederacies between the Jews and the nations of the world could not be agreeable on either side, especially to the former; but so it was, and so were their idolatries likewise. The Targum is,

“now she will leave her idols, and return to thy worship; but she returned not.”

Ver. 44. *Yet they went in unto her,* &c.] Made a league with one another, and joined in idolatrous worship:

as they go in unto a woman that playeth the harlot; with the same heat of lust, with the same greediness and eager desire as young men do when they go into a brothel house where a beautiful harlot lives:

so went they in unto Aholah and unto Aholibah; the lewd women, the ten tribes of Israel, and the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, which apostatized from God, and committed idolatry; with these the Sabeans before mentioned, and other nations, joined in idolatrous worship.

Ver. 45. *And the righteous men,* &c.] Some understand this of the prophets, who were really righteous men; and foretold the righteous judgments of God that should come upon the idolatrous Jews, which was a judging them: others, of righteous men in general, who will one and all agree that persons guilty of such crimes ought to suffer the punishment adequate to them, and usually inflicted on such; but rather the Babylonians are here meant; who, though not righteous in themselves, or truly so, yet were so in comparison of the wicked Jews, who had a divine revelation, and knew better than to commit such idolatries; whereas these were Gentiles that knew not God, nor his will. So the Targum,

“and righteous men in respect (or comparison) of them;”

that is, of Israel and Judah; and they may be also called so, because they were the executioners of justice, the instruments of inflicting God’s righteous judgments on the Jews; and, among other things, for their perfidy and treachery to them; so that they would appear just in the eyes of other nations for treating them as they did:

they shall judge them after the manner of adulteresses, and after the manner of women that shed blood; that is, according to the law concerning such persons; and shall condemn them to suffer the punishment denounced on such, and shall execute it on them:

because they are adulteresses, the blood is in their hands; are guilty, not only of corporeal uncleanness, but of spiritual adultery; that is, idolatry; and of the murder of their prophets and righteous men, and even of their own children sacrificed to idols; than which nothing can be more unnatural and barbarous for women to do.

Ver. 46. *For thus saith the Lord God, I will bring up a company upon them, &c.*] Or, “do thou bring up a company upon them”^{f368}, or “against them”. The Targum represents it as spoken to the prophet, thus,

“prophesy that armies shall come up against them.”

Kimchi interprets it as we do, “I will bring up”, &c. and so others^{f369}. By this “company” is to be understood the Chaldean army, whom God in his providence, and in righteous judgment, would bring up against the Jews; styled a “convocation”^{f370}, assembly or congregation, in allusion to the sanhedrim, or court of judicature, that took cognizance of such crimes, and judged and condemned for them:

and will give them to be removed and spoiled; or, “for a removing”, and a “spoil”^{f371}; that is, he would give the Jews into the hands of the Chaldean army; their persons to be carried captive into other lands, and their substance to be spoiled and plundered.

Ver. 47. *And the company shall stone them with stones, &c.*] Which was the punishment of adulterers and idolaters, (^{f370}Deuteronomy 13:10 22:24), this seems to refer to the Chaldean army casting out stones from their slings and engines into the city of Jerusalem, when they besieged it, by which they killed some, and beat down the houses, which fell upon others, and destroyed them. So the Targum,

“and the army shall stone them with the stones of a sling:”

and dispatch them with their swords; cut them in pieces with them, such as sallied out of the city upon them, or they found without, or by any means fell into their hands:

they shall slay their sons and their daughters; when they broke into the city, and took it; or when they found them making their escape, and hiding themselves in secret places:

and burn up their houses with fire; as they did; the temple, the king's palace, the houses of noblemen, and all the houses in Jerusalem; (see ^{<4513>}Jeremiah 52:13).

Ver. 48. *Thus will I cause to cease lewdness out of the land, &c.*] There being no opportunity for it, nor any to commit it; what were not destroyed by famine, sword, and pestilence, during the siege, were carried captive; and, when they returned, were never more given to idolatry; (see ^{<4327>}Ezekiel 23:27):

that all women may be taught not to do after your lewdness; that is, that all provinces, as the Targum, all kingdoms; states, churches, and people, hearing and reading the judgments of God on this people for their idolatry, may learn to shun it; it is even an instruction to us, at this distance, not to commit idolatry, as they did, (^{<4607>}1 Corinthians 10:7,11). The church of Rome ought to observe this.

Ver. 49. *And they shall recompense your lewdness upon you, &c.*] Or, "give your lewdness"^{f372}; the punishment of it; the just recompence of reward for their idolatry:

and ye shall bear the sins of your idols; the shame, and guilt, and punishment of their sins committed in worshipping idols:

and ye shall know that I am the Lord God; the only Lord God who is to be worshipped, and not idols; jealous of my honour and glory, and true to my word; who can and will accomplish all I have said; this the Jews knew and acknowledged when in captivity, and returned from it, as they will more fully when they shall be converted in the latter day.