

**Ezek. 23:1** The word of the LORD came again unto me, saying,  
**Ezek. 23:2** Son of man, there were two women, the daughters of one mother:  
**Ezek. 23:3** And they committed whoredoms in Egypt; they committed whoredoms in their youth: there were their breasts pressed, and there they bruised the teats of their virginity.

**Ezek. 23:4** And the names of them *were* Aholah the elder, and Aholibah her sister: and they were mine, and they bare sons and daughters. Thus *were* their names; Samaria *is* Aholah, and Jerusalem Aholibah.

I already know this is going to be a hard chapter for me. The Lord directs the prophet to use some very graphic language to make His point.

Constable quoting Taylor: "The feeling of nausea which a chapter like this arouses must be blamed not on the writer of the chapter nor even on its contents, but on the conduct which had to be described in such revolting terms."

This chapter begins by introducing two women, sisters, daughters of one mother. The names of the sisters are Aholah, identified as the oldest, and Aholibah. YHWH declares that they were His daughters, and went on to produce many sons and daughters (probably referencing the cities and towns of the whole of the nation). Aholah is identified as Samaria (representing the Northern Kingdom of Israel), and Aholibah is identified as Jerusalem (representing the Southern Kingdom of Judah).

"Aholah" = her tent (i.e. idolatrous sanctuary)

"Aholibah" = my tent (is) in her

The names God gave the sisters were specifically chosen. Aholah, Samaria, was the capital of the Northern Kingdom and was the location of an "idolatrous sanctuary." Aholibah, Jerusalem, was the approved location of the temple of God. Maybe Aholah is identified as the oldest, since she was basically composed of ten tribes vs. Aholibah's two; maybe it is because she was the first to prostitute herself with other gods. Both were daughters of Sarah, the wife of Abraham, father of the Jewish people, a people set apart to God by covenant.

They were ensnared in a lifestyle of prostitution at a very young age; it was in Egypt that they were introduced to the worship of other gods. Proof of this is shown by the actions of the people while Moses was receiving the Ten Commandments from God.

**Ex. 32:1-8** And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for *as for* this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which *are* in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring *them* unto me. And all the people brake off the golden earrings which *were* in their ears, and brought *them* unto Aaron. And he received *them* at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These *be* thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And when Aaron saw *it*, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said,

To morrow *is* a feast to the LORD. And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play. And the LORD said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted *themselves*: They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These *be* thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

**Ezek. 23:5** And Aholah played the harlot when she was mine; and she doted on her lovers, on the Assyrians *her* neighbours,

**Ezek. 23:6** Which *were* clothed with blue, captains and rulers, all of them desirable young men, horsemen riding upon horses.

**Ezek. 23:7** Thus she committed her whoredoms with them, with all them *that were* the chosen men of Assyria, and with all on whom she doted: with all their idols she defiled herself.

**Ezek. 23:8** Neither left she her whoredoms *brought* from Egypt: for in her youth they lay with her, and they bruised the breasts of her virginity, and poured their whoredom upon her.

The Hebrew word for *harlot* is a reference to idolatry as well as adultery. Though Aholah had made a covenant with YHWH, her people were enticed by their heathen neighbors, the Assyrians; and it wasn't long before they began to embrace the idol worship practiced by the Assyrians. It seems that they even worshipped the gods of Egypt that they had learned about during the Egyptian captivity when Israel was but a very young and growing nation of people.

God's people today have to guard against the same temptation—the worldly pleasure of sin for a season.

**Ezek. 23:9** Wherefore I have delivered her into the hand of her lovers, into the hand of the Assyrians, upon whom she doted.

**Ezek. 23:10** These discovered her nakedness: they took her sons and her daughters, and slew her with the sword: and she became famous among women; for they had executed judgment upon her.

This reminds me of the old saying, "Be careful what you wish for." Israel had sought alliance and protection from the Assyrians, so God finally let them experience the fruit of that desire. God loved His people and had given great evidence of His faithfulness and His ability to provide for them in every way. Now they would experience what it is like to be left in the care of those who do not love unconditionally, but with personal motives, and who did not have the ability or authority to provide for them as wonderfully as did God. The Northern Kingdom had been in captivity for over 100 years at the time of Ezekiel's writing. The capture of Aholah (the Northern Kingdom) took place in 722 BC, and it was well known that she had rebelled against the God of Israel and was suffering at His hand of judgment.

**Ezek. 23:11** And when her sister Aholibah saw *this*, she was more corrupt in her inordinate love than she, and in her whoredoms more than her sister in *her* whoredoms.

Did Aholah's experience serve as a deterrent to Aholibah (Jerusalem, the Southern Kingdom)? Amazingly, it did not. God declares that the people of the Southern Kingdom were even more corrupt than those of the Northern Kingdom. The Hebrew for the word *corrupt* references decay, spoil and waste; Webster's definition is even more vivid: "Changed from a sound to a putrid state; Changed from a state of uprightness, correctness, truth, etc., to a worse state; vitiated; depraved; debased; perverted..."

As I continued to think about what would make the actions of Aholibah worse than Aholah's, I began to wonder if the worship of the god "Molech" that involved the sacrifice of children had anything to do with it. A passage in 2Kings 17 referencing the reign of Hoshea, the last king of Israel, quickly put that thought to rest.

2Kings 17:17 And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger.

2Kings 17:18 Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight: there was none left but the tribe of Judah only.

Maybe her wickedness was more corrupt in that she was blessed as the designated earthly dwelling place of God, which made her actions more "in your face." She had also been warned of God's judgment through witnessing His actions against Aholah. Instead of being repentant, she chose to respond with defiance and with actions that desecrated His temple as well; again this would evidence a more "in your face" attitude toward God.

**Ezek. 23:12** She doted upon the Assyrians *her neighbours*, captains and rulers clothed most gorgeously, horsemen riding upon horses, all of them desirable young men.

**Ezek. 23:13** Then I saw that she was defiled, *that they took both one way*,

**Ezek. 23:14** And *that* she increased her whoredoms: for when she saw men pourtrayed upon the wall, the images of the Chaldeans pourtrayed with vermilion,

**Ezek. 23:15** Girded with girdles upon their loins, exceeding in dyed attire upon their heads, all of them princes to look to, after the manner of the Babylonians of Chaldea, the land of their nativity:

**Ezek. 23:16** And as soon as she saw them with her eyes, she doted upon them, and sent messengers unto them into Chaldea.

Aholibah, Judah, followed the same path of Ephraim and aligned herself with first the Assyrians and then the Chaldeans (Babylonians). It would seem that Ahaz sought protection from Assyria when threatened by Syria and Israel (the Northern Kingdom).

2Kings 16:5 Then Rezin king of Syria and Pekah son of Remaliah king of Israel came up to Jerusalem to war: and they besieged Ahaz, but could not overcome *him*.

2Kings 16:6 At that time Rezin king of Syria recovered Elath to Syria, and drave the Jews from Elath: and the Syrians came to Elath, and dwelt there unto this day.

2Kings 16:7 So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglathpileser king of Assyria, saying, I *am* thy servant and thy son: come up, and save me out of the hand of the king of Syria, and out of the hand of the king of Israel, which rise up against me.

2Kings 16:8 And Ahaz took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the LORD, and in the treasures of the king's house, and sent *it for* a present to the king of Assyria.

2Kings 16:9 And the king of Assyria hearkened unto him: for the king of Assyria went up against Damascus, and took it, and carried *the people of it* captive to Kir, and slew Rezin.

Although I cannot find scripture regarding the impact of the pictures/images of the Babylonians, I know it is true because the Holy Spirit has inspired this record.

It does not surprise me at all that a rebellious wicked people would be lured by visions of a culture that exuded power and success. Art, and all other kinds of visual media, can have a powerful effect upon people. The current day and age is dominated by visual images that attack our morals and impact our attitudes toward truth and righteousness. We would all be much wiser to employ the heart of the psalmist when he said:

Psa. 101:3 I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes:

The enemy has made great inroads in affecting the effectiveness of the church by waging a relentless campaign to seduce us into accepting "wicked" things as entertainment and freedom of artistic expression. We have become desensitized to the point of not practicing spiritual discernment between good and evil. We tend to judge by the world's standards rather than God's standard so as not to interfere with fulfilling the desires of the flesh. It is a constant struggle in my own life. Liberty in Christ is not license to embrace what is wicked no matter how we may try to justify it.

**Ezek. 23:17 And the Babylonians came to her into the bed of love, and they defiled her with their whoredom, and she was polluted with them, and her mind was alienated from them.**

**Ezek. 23:18 So she discovered her whoredoms, and discovered her nakedness: then my mind was alienated from her, like as my mind was alienated from her sister.**

**Ezek. 23:19 Yet she multiplied her whoredoms, in calling to remembrance the days of her youth, wherein she had played the harlot in the land of Egypt.**

**Ezek. 23:20 For she doted upon their paramours, whose flesh *is as* the flesh of asses, and whose issue *is like* the issue of horses.**

**Ezek. 23:21 Thus thou calledst to remembrance the lewdness of thy youth, in bruising thy teats by the Egyptians for the paps of thy youth.**

It didn't take long for Judah to want out of her relationship with the Babylonians. When they rebelled against the authority of Babylon, the remnant that escaped captivity fled to Egypt in fear.

2Kings 25:24 And Gedaliah swore to them, and to their men, and said unto them, Fear not to be the servants of the Chaldees: dwell in the land, and serve the king of Babylon; and it shall be well with you.

2Kings 25:25 But it came to pass in the seventh month, that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, the son of Elishama, of the seed royal, came, and ten men with him, and smote Gedaliah, that he died, and the Jews and the Chaldees that were with him at Mizpah.

2Kings 25:26 And all the people, both small and great, and the captains of the armies, arose, and came to Egypt: for they were afraid of the Chaldees.

V18 - Judah was blatant in her actions rejecting God and embracing the false gods of her neighbors. God just as publicly alienated Himself (severed His relationship with them) by giving her over to be used by her lovers whom she would later have to acknowledge as her enemies.

V19-20 – Just as she had as a young nation, the people of God in Judah embraced the false gods and the associated pleasures of the flesh which the writer of Hebrews declares are but for a season.

Heb. 11:24 By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;

Heb. 11:25 Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, *than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season....*

**Ezek. 23:22 Therefore, O Aholibah, thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will raise up thy lovers against thee, from whom thy mind is alienated, and I will bring them against thee on every side;**

**Ezek. 23:23 The Babylonians, and all the Chaldeans, Pekod, and Shoa, and Koa, and all the Assyrians with them: all of them desirable young men, captains and rulers, great lords and renowned, all of them riding upon horses.**

This is another statement of the sovereign hand of Almighty God at work in the midst of His people. He is the One that will cause those to whom Israel/Judah turned in rejection of Him to become their enemies. It would seem that verse 23 is making identification of some of the prominent factions in the Babylonian empire. Maybe they were singled out because of the meanings of their names.

Pekod = punishment      Shoa = rich      Koa = to cut off

These meanings are all associated with Babylon regarding their relationship to Judah.

According to Eerdman's Dictionary:

"Pekod" = An Aramean tribe inhabiting the plain E of the lower (southern) Tigris River. Recorded among the conquests of various Assyrian kings, Pekod is associated with Babylonia in the oracles of Jeremiah (Jer. 50:21; cf. NRSV mg "Punishment") and Ezekiel (Ezek. 23:23).

"Shoa" = A people whose soldiers, probably mercenaries, accompany Babylonian invaders in a vision of an attack against Jerusalem (Ezek. 23:23). They are commonly identified with the Sutu, a nomadic Aramean tribe known from inscriptions and other sources, but this is far from certain.

“Koa” = A people who probably lived E of the Tigris River and N of the territory occupied by Pekod (Ezek. 23:23). They are generally thought to be identical with the Guti familiar from cuneiform sources.

**Ezek. 23:24** And they shall come against thee with chariots, wagons, and wheels, and with an assembly of people, *which* shall set against thee buckler and shield and helmet round about: and I will set judgment before them, and they shall judge thee according to their judgments.

**Ezek. 23:25** And I will set my jealousy against thee, and they shall deal furiously with thee: they shall take away thy nose and thine ears; and thy remnant shall fall by the sword: they shall take thy sons and thy daughters; and thy residue shall be devoured by the fire.

**Ezek. 23:26** They shall also strip thee out of thy clothes, and take away thy fair jewels.

God is going to allow the Babylonians to exact judgment upon Judah according to their own laws. According to the NIV Commentary, an ancient Near Eastern punishment for an adulteress was to cut off her nose and ears. The women of that time would often adorn themselves with jewels and rings in the nose and ears. The Lord is making the same comparison to Aholibah. She would no longer possess anything with which to entice her neighbors. She would no longer possess any attributes of beauty in the eyes of the world. Some would suffer death by sword; others would be taken into captivity; others would die in the fires of destruction.

**Ezek. 23:27** Thus will I make thy lewdness to cease from thee, and thy whoredom *brought* from the land of Egypt: so that thou shalt not lift up thine eyes unto them, nor remember Egypt any more.

God’s actions are righteous and loving regarding His covenant people. His purpose is to purify His people; to cause them to repent and turn back to a life of faith and obedience before Him. He is putting them in a position to recognize Him as God Almighty, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the covenant God of Israel. He is affirming the truth of His words through His prophets by His actions.

**Ezek. 23:28** For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will deliver thee into the hand *of them* whom thou hatest, into the hand *of them* from whom thy mind is alienated:

**Ezek. 23:29** And they shall deal with thee hatefully, and shall take away all thy labour, and shall leave thee naked and bare: and the nakedness of thy whoredoms shall be discovered, both thy lewdness and thy whoredoms.

This is a reiteration of the truths presented in previous verses. God is going to deliver Judah into the hands of the Babylonians, their former lovers, and they will suffer cruelly. Judah will be made to recognize her whoredom—her rejection of her relationship with YHWH.

**Ezek. 23:30** I will do these *things* unto thee, because thou hast gone a whoring after the heathen, *and* because thou art polluted with their idols.

**Ezek. 23:31** Thou hast walked in the way of thy sister; therefore will I give her cup into thine hand.

**Ezek. 23:32 Thus saith the Lord GOD; Thou shalt drink of thy sister's cup deep and large: thou shalt be laughed to scorn and had in derision; it containeth much.**

**Ezek. 23:33 Thou shalt be filled with drunkenness and sorrow, with the cup of astonishment and desolation, with the cup of thy sister Samaria.**

**Ezek. 23:34 Thou shalt even drink it and suck *it* out, and thou shalt break the sherds thereof, and pluck off thine own breasts: for I have spoken *it*, saith the Lord GOD.**

Again, the Lord has the prophet declare why He is judging His people--because they had turned to the idols and false gods of the heathen nations. They had followed the example of the Northern Kingdom, Aholah. Because of this, Judah would drink of the cup of judgment just as deeply as had Ephraim. They would no longer occupy a place of privilege and honor among the nations. Their judgment would be so thorough that it is pictured as draining the cup to the point of causing it to break. The breasts of a woman are distinctly associated with her sexuality. This is graphic language that paints a picture of God's people being brought to a position of shame and repentance that will cause them to want to be rid of anything that could be used to draw them back into a relationship of spiritual adultery. They will recognize that spiritual beauty is to be preferred over physical beauty.

**Ezek. 23:35 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thou hast forgotten me, and cast me behind thy back, therefore bear thou also thy lewdness and thy whoredoms.**

The Lord again declares through Ezekiel that Judah is being judged because she had broken covenant with her God. You can't misunderstand His purpose when he declares it so many times.

**Ezek. 23:36 The LORD said moreover unto me; Son of man, wilt thou judge Aholah and Aholibah? yea, declare unto them their abominations;**

**Ezek. 23:37 That they have committed adultery, and blood *is* in their hands, and with their idols have they committed adultery, and have also caused their sons, whom they bare unto me, to pass for them through *the fire*, to devour *them*.**

Again the Lord calls upon Ezekiel to confront both sisters with their sin as a plea for them to repent and turn back to faith and obedience to God. God describes their sins as *abominations*, morally disgusting. Not only have they committed adultery (both physically and spiritually), they have murdered their children in the process. God declares that these children were born "unto Him"; they had been born with a purpose. They were meant to declare the truth of God before the heathen as part of His covenant people.

**Ezek. 23:38 Moreover this they have done unto me: they have defiled my sanctuary in the same day, and have profaned my sabbaths.**

**Ezek. 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, lo, thus have they done in the midst of mine house.**

In some way the people had conditioned themselves to think that they could still maintain a relationship with YHWH even as they practiced their idolatry. They

would come to perform their rituals at the temple thinking that God would be satisfied with an outward appearance of obedience to Him. (10/12) They would actually come to the temple and go through their rituals on the very day they had just sacrificed their children to a false god.

God is very clear that He judges based on what is in a man's heart.

1Sam. 16:7 ...for *the LORD seeth* not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.

There are verses in the New Testament that support the same thought; it is what comes from inside a person that defiles Him or makes Him unclean or determines his guilt of sin.

Heb. 12:14 Follow peace with all *men*, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

Heb. 12:15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble *you*, and thereby many be defiled;

Luke 6:45 A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.

Matt. 5:28 But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

It is only to be expected that they had disregarded and broken the Sabbath as well.

**Ezek. 23:40 And furthermore, that ye have sent for men to come from far, unto whom a messenger *was* sent; and, lo, they came: for whom thou didst wash thyself, paintedst thy eyes, and deckedst thyself with ornaments,**

**Ezek. 23:41 And satest upon a stately bed, and a table prepared before it, whereupon thou hast set mine incense and mine oil.**

**Ezek. 23:42 And a voice of a multitude being at ease *was* with her: and with the men of the common sort *were* brought Sabean from the wilderness, which put bracelets upon their hands, and beautiful crowns upon their heads.**

It is still hard to understand how a nation who had experienced so much of the miraculous at the hand of God in providing for her would turn to other "men" for assistance of any kind in place of God Almighty—but we are often guilty of the very same sin. Sometimes God will use other people in providing for our needs, but we are never to seek the wisdom or provision of men first. We are always to seek God first for His wisdom, direction and provision. This stood out to me in a particular way when I was reading through Chronicles one time.

2Chr. 16:7 And at that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah, and said unto him, **Because thou hast relied on the king of Syria, and not relied on the LORD thy God**, therefore is the host of the king of Syria escaped out of thine hand.

2Chr. 16:8 Were not the Ethiopians and the Lubims a huge host, with very many chariots and horsemen? yet, because thou didst rely on the LORD, he delivered them into thine hand.

2Chr. 16:9 For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of *them* whose heart *is* perfect toward him. Herein thou hast done foolishly: therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars.

2Chr. 16:10 Then Asa was wroth with the seer, and put him in a prison house; for *he was* in a rage with him because of this *thing*. And Asa oppressed *some* of the people the same time.

2Chr. 16:11 And, behold, the acts of Asa, first and last, lo, they *are* written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel.

2Chr. 16:12 And Asa in the thirty and ninth year of his reign was diseased in his feet, until his disease *was* exceeding *great*: **yet in his disease he sought not to the LORD, but to the physicians.**

Asa was a king who is described as doing right in the eyes of the Lord, but he messed up. In spite of God's deliverance for him and the nation against the Ethiopians and the Lubims, he chose to seek the aid of the King of Syria against the Northern Kingdom of Israel toward the end of his reign. Even more interesting to me, God made a point of telling us that he sought the physicians rather than the Lord regarding the disease in his feet that resulted in his death. God wants us to look to Him for every need in our life.

Not only did God's people seek these alliances, they made themselves desirable in the eyes of the world and gave of their treasures and God-given blessings to woo the heathen nations into alliance with them. Verse 42 seems to indicate that they became so comfortable in their wickedness that they were content to accommodate the common man as well as the rich and powerful. They had no noble cause for these alliances other than to fulfill the flesh.

**Ezek. 23:43 Then said I unto her that was old in adulteries, Will they now commit whoredoms with her, and she with them?**

**Ezek. 23:44 Yet they went in unto her, as they go in unto a woman that playeth the harlot: so went they in unto Aholah and unto Aholibah, the lewd women.** "old in adulteries" – Hardened and worn out through their wicked lifestyle. The nations that "used" God's people acted in accordance with the way of the flesh—to fulfill their lusts without regard or concern for the woman they used.

**Ezek. 23:45 And the righteous men, they shall judge them after the manner of adulteresses, and after the manner of women that shed blood; because they are adulteresses, and blood is in their hands.**

Though hard to accept, it would appear that "the righteous men" are a reference to the Assyrians and Babylonians that God used to judge His people. I am reminded that In Isaiah God described Cyrus as His shepherd. Their righteousness was directly related to the fact that they were being used in the hand of a righteous God in judgment of His people.

**Ezek. 23:46 For thus saith the Lord GOD; I will bring up a company upon them, and will give them to be removed and spoiled.**

**Ezek. 23:47 And the company shall stone them with stones, and dispatch them with their swords; they shall slay their sons and their daughters, and burn up their houses with fire.**

The sisters were judged guilty and would suffer accordingly—they would be put to death so to speak as a nation.

Lev. 20:10 And the man that committeth adultery with *another* man's wife, *even he* that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.

Both sisters suffered destruction and captivity in judgment at the hand of God. They were effectively “put to death” as a nation at that time. The wonderful promise that Ezekiel will prophesy in later chapters (36-37) is that she will be resurrected as a nation (which happened in part after the Babylonian captivity and then again in May 1948) and will eventually experience a restored relationship to YHWH that will never again be severed.

Jer. 31:33 But this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Jer. 31:34 And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

**Ezek. 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.**

**Ezek. 23:49 And they shall recompense your lewdness upon you, and ye shall bear the sins of your idols: and ye shall know that I *am* the Lord GOD.**

Again, God deliberately states the reason for such harsh judgment upon His people. He is determined to cleanse them of the practice of idolatry.

“all women” – could be a reference to other cities or other nations. According to God's original purpose, Israel was to be an example before the nations of the righteousness of God and the blessings as well as the responsibilities associated with relationship to Him. A loving Father always does what is best for His child's eternal future.

As His people experienced His judgment, they would be reminded of the truth declared by their prophets and would KNOW that YHWH is LORD.