

# Ezekiel 23 - Parable of the Two Harlot Sisters: Oholah (Samaria) and Oholibah (Jerusalem)

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## The Two Sisters

The dark parable of Oholah and Oholibah unmasks the loathsome nature of unfaithfulness to God and provides a corrective for any light view of apostasy. The picture, revolting though it is, shows the awfulness of spiritual adultery whereby the Lord's people, who are one with Him as bride and bridegroom, repudiate their union with Him and give themselves to the service of the world, the flesh, and the devil (Cf. James 4:4).

This chapter seems to be a restatement of the parable in Ezek 16, since both chapters deal with Judah's unfaithfulness to God. However the focus in Ezek 16 is on Judah's *idolatry*, whereas in Ezek 23 he stressed Judah's *illicit foreign alliances* in addition to her idolatry.

## Ezekiel 23

#### (iv) Parable of the two sisters (23:1-49)

##### (a) Their identification (23:1-4)

1 The word of the LORD came to me again, saying,  
1 The word of the LORD came to me again, saying,  
1 This message came to me from the LORD:  
1 The word of the LORD came again unto me, saying,  
- A new revelation from the Lord to Ezekiel, which summarizes the political and religious infidelity of both Israel and Judah

2 "Son of man, there were **two women**, the daughters of **one mother**;  
2 "Son of man, there were two women, the daughters of one mother;  
2 "Son of Man, here are two sisters who are daughters from the same mother.  
2 Son of man, there were two women, the daughters of one mother:  
- "...two women" - two sisters; metaphors for Samaria and Jerusalem (Cf. v4)  
— In the OT, Israel as a whole, is portrayed as the wife of God, but she is an unfaithful wife. However, when the two kingdoms are in view, the picture changes to that of two sisters, one older and one younger, but both are regarded as the wives of God.  
— This principle is introduced in Jer 3:6-18, where these two sisters are described as being married to the same husband  
- "...one mother" - the nation of Israel

3 and they prostituted themselves in Egypt. They prostituted themselves in their youth; there **their breasts were squeezed and there their virgin breasts were handled**.  
3 and they played the harlot in Egypt. They played the harlot in their youth; there their breasts were pressed and there their virgin bosom was handled.  
3 They committed sexual immorality in Egypt. They did this in their youth. There, their breasts were caressed. Their virgin breasts were fondled.  
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.  
- God reveals that His wife was prostituting herself spiritually from the earliest days of their marriage (Cf. Joshua 24:14; 2 Kings 21:15; Amos 5:25-26)  
- "... their breasts were squeezed and there their virgin breasts were handled" - this happened in Egypt; the Egyptians played an active role in teaching the Israelites to worship foreign gods.  
— The role of Egypt in that sense can be found in Gen 45:10; 46:2-5; 47:1-6; Ex 1:8 (the golden calf) and 24:14

4 Their names were **Oholah** the elder and **Oholibah** her sister. And they became Mine, and they gave birth to sons and daughters. And *as for* their names, Samaria is Oholah and Jerusalem is Oholibah.

4 Their names were **Oholah** the elder and **Oholibah** her sister. And **they became Mine, and they bore sons and daughters**. And *as for* their names, Samaria is Oholah and Jerusalem is Oholibah.

4 The older one was named Oholah and her sister was named Oholibah. They belonged to me and gave birth to sons and daughters. Now as to their real identities, Oholah refers to Samaria and Oholibah to Jerusalem."

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.

- "...Oholah" - "her own tent"; this likely refers to some sort of religious shrine. This sister represents Samaria, the capital of the north (Israel).

— In Israel, the people established their own places of worship ("her own tent"), referring to the fact that the people set up their own places of worship, focusing on statues of golden calves

- "...Oholibah" - "my tent is in her"; this sister represents Jerusalem, and the tent alludes to the Temple.

- "...they became Mine, and they bore sons and daughters" - even in their divided state, Israel and Judah were both considered God's wives and they bore Him sons and daughters

God never recognized the worship that Jeroboam set up in the north. King Jeroboam put up two golden calves, one in Beth-el and one in Samaria, and tried to keep his people from going south to worship in Jerusalem. But the faithful migrated south (2 Chr 11:13-17). It was very easy for the prophets and the people of the southern kingdom to say that God will judge those golden calves in the north—and He surely did. However, He is going to judge the southern kingdom also, because they were going through the ritual of a dead religion; they thought they were right with God, but they actually were living in sin.

(b) Their sins (23:5:21)

(1) Oholah = Samaria (23:5-10)

5 "Oholah **prostituted herself** while she was Mine; and she **lusted** after her lovers, after the Assyrians, *her* neighbors,

5 "Oholah played the harlot while she was Mine; and she lusted after her lovers, after the Assyrians, *her* neighbors,

5 "Oholah committed sexual immorality while she belonged to me. She lusted for Assyria's warriors,

5 And Aholah played the harlot when she was mine; and she doted on her lovers, on the Assyrians her neighbours,

- "...prostituted herself" - the lovers are, as in 16:33, the nations with which the kings of Israel were in alliance, and of these the Assyrians are named as preeminent

- "...lusted" - *agav*, to have inordinate affection. This was not loving devotion of a wife to her husband, rather it was a strong desire for illicit lovers, which were the gods of the Assyrians

— Hosea prophesied during the last days of the northern kingdom, and he emphasized the same culpability (Cf. Hosea 5:13; 7:11; 8:9; 12:1)

6 who were clothed in purple, governors and officials, all of them handsome young men, horsemen riding on horses.

6 who were clothed in purple, governors and officials, all of them desirable young men, horsemen riding on horses.

6 who were clothed in blue—including governors and commanders. All of them were desirable young men—horsemen mounted on horses.

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

- Israel was amazed by the fact that her neighbors were "clothed in purple," the finest and most expensive fabric available, and by the fact that they were handsome young men and skilled horsemen.

— Assyria's wealth and power so impressed Israel that she thought it must be the Assyrian gods who were responsible for it. So they began to believe that these deities must possess a superior level of power compared to Israel's own God. Thus, the people began turning to idolatry.

### **The "Black Obelisk" of Shalmaneser III**

The Black Obelisk is a black limestone bas-relief sculpture from Nimrud in northern Iraq, currently displayed in the British Museum. It is historically significant because it displays the earliest ancient depiction of an Israelite.

The Black Obelisk of the Assyrian king Shalmaneser III (dated ~841 BC) mentions "Jehu son of Omri" and pictures him bowing down to the Assyrian monarch.

This is not mentioned in the Bible, but it probably resulted from the Syrian threat to Israel. Syria was expanding into Israel's land in the Transjordan during Jehu's reign (2 Kings 10:32-34).





### Israel's Relationships with Assyria

To counter that threat, Jehu allied Israel with Assyria and submitted himself as a vassal. The obelisk pictures Jehu and his servants bringing tribute to the Assyrian king. Menahem and Hoshea, two later kings of Israel, also paid tribute to Assyria (2 Kings 15:19-20; 17:3-4).

- The Prophet Hosea (~760-720 BC) rebuked Israel for her dependence on Assyria instead of on the Lord (Cf. Hosea 5:13-14; 7:11; 8:9; 12:1).
- After Israel became Assyria's vassal she could not disentangle herself
- When she finally tried to break away by forming a coalition with both Syria and Egypt, she felt Assyria's wrath (Cf. 2 Kings 17:4; Is 7:1)
- The very nation to which Samaria had turned for assistance would destroy her

7 She bestowed her obscene practices on **them, all** of whom *were* the choicest men of Assyria; and with **all** whom she lusted after, with **all** their idols she defiled herself.

7 She bestowed her harlotries on them, all of whom *were* the choicest men of Assyria; and with all whom she lusted after, with all their idols she defiled herself.

7 She bestowed her sexual favors on them—all of them, the best of the Assyrians—and with whomever she lusted for. "She defiled herself with all their idols.

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.

- "...them" - the Assyrian elites

- "...all" [3x] - *kol*, emphasizes Israel's complete lack of restraint when it came to indulging in idolatry. The Hebrew reads: "Thus she bestowed her whoredoms upon them, the choicest men of Assyria, *all* of them, and with *all* for whom she lusted, with *all* their idols, she defiled herself."

8 She did not abandon her obscene practices from *the time in* Egypt; for in her youth men had slept with her, and they handled her virgin breasts and poured out their obscene practice on her.

8 She did not forsake her harlotries from *the time in* Egypt; for in her youth men had lain with her, and they handled her virgin bosom and poured out their lust on her.

8 She never abandoned the immorality that she practiced in Egypt during her youth, where they laid down with her and fondled her virgin breasts, lavishing her with all kinds of favors.

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.

- Israel's idolatry with the Assyrian gods was not the first time they practiced idolatry, but rather was consistent with her previous history in Egypt

— Once Israel was liberated from Egypt, she was incapable of overcoming her routines and proceeded to repeat the same behavior with the Assyrians

9 Therefore, I handed her over to her lovers, to the Assyrians, after whom she lusted.

9 Therefore, I gave her into the hand of her lovers, into the hand of the Assyrians, after whom she lusted.

9 Therefore, I turned her over to the control of her lovers, that is, into the control of the Assyrians for whom she lusted.

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

- Describes God's judgment on Samaria/Israel. God used the same people whom Israel had committed adultery as tools to punish her. This judgment occurred in 722-721 BC.

10 They uncovered her nakedness; they took her sons and her daughters, but they killed her with the sword. So she became a subject of gossip among women, and they executed judgments on her.

10 They uncovered her nakedness; they took her sons and her daughters, but they slew her with the sword. Thus she became a byword among women, and they executed



judgments on her.

10 They stripped her naked, took away her sons and daughters, and executed her with a sword. She became an object of ridicule among other nations when they punished her."

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.

- Further describes God's judgment on Israel (northern kingdom)...she was stripped naked, her sons and daughters were taken captive, and she was killed with the sword.

— As a result, she became a "subject of gossip" among women, meaning she became a proverb among other nations

The judgment on Israel (northern kingdom) described in v5-10 had already taken place by the time of Ezekiel's writing. God is recollecting His judgment on Israel to Ezekiel here. Now the analogy shifts to Jerusalem.

(2) Oholibah = Jerusalem (23:11-21)

**11** "Now her sister Oholibah saw *this*, yet **she was more corrupt** in her lust than she, and her obscene practices were more than the prostitution of her sister.

**11** "Now her sister Oholibah saw *this*, yet she was more corrupt in her lust than she, and her harlotries were more than the harlotries of her sister.

**11** "Her sister Oholibah saw this, but she was more corrupt in her lust and sexual immorality than her sister had been in her own sexual immorality.

**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.

- The Southern Kingdom had over a hundred year advantage over the Northern Kingdom. She saw them fall into idolatry and sin, and the foreign alliances with Assyria, ending up being taken captive by the Assyrians themselves! God judged them for spiritual corruption.

— Did Judah learn by their example? No. The message of this passage (v11-21) was that Judah followed the same path as Israel (2 Kings 21; 2 Chr 33).

- "...she was more corrupt" - rather than simply matching Samaria's adulterous behavior, Judah took it to a whole new level

— As Judah saw Samaria's actions and the resulting judgment, her craving for illicit lovers became even more depraved

12 She lusted after the Assyrians, governors and officials, the ones near, opulently dressed, horsemen riding on horses, all of them handsome young men.

12 She lusted after the Assyrians, governors and officials, the ones near, magnificently dressed, horsemen riding on horses, all of them desirable young men.



12 She lusted after the Assyrians—governors, commanders, warriors clothed in gorgeous attire, cavalry mounted on their horses—all of them desirable young men.

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

- Judah also engaged in adultery with the Assyrians; she longed for the elites of Assyria

— The fact that Jerusalem sought alliances with Assyria and also engaged in adultery with these idols is documented in 2 Kings 16:7-16

13 And I saw that she had defiled herself; they both took the same way.

13 I saw that she had defiled herself; they both took the same way.

13 I saw that she was defiled, because the two of them both were on the same path.

13 Then I saw that she was defiled, that they took both one way,

- Jerusalem defiled herself in the same way as her sister Samaria did

14 So **she increased her obscene practices**. And she saw men carved on the wall, images of the Chaldeans drawn in bright red,

14 So she increased her harlotries. And she saw men portrayed on the wall, images of the Chaldeans portrayed with vermilion,

14 "She became even more sexually immoral when she saw the images of the Chaldean men who had been carved in red on their walls.

14 And that she increased her whoredoms: for when she saw men portrayed upon the wall, the images of the Chaldeans portrayed with vermilion,

- "...she increased her obscene practices" - not satisfied with merely worshipping the gods of Assyria, she began to commit adultery also with the gods of Babylon

— What attracted Jerusalem to the Babylonians was her, upon entering a pagan temple, she was captivated by the elaborately attired Babylonian gods depicted on the walls. She was so impressed she began lusting after them.

15 wearing belts around their waists, with flowing turbans on their heads, all of them looking like officers, like the Babylonians *in* Chaldea, the land of their birth.

15 girded with belts on their loins, with flowing turbans on their heads, all of them looking like officers, like the Babylonians *in* Chaldea, the land of their birth.

15 Girded with waistbands around their loins, with flowing turbans on their heads, all of them looked like chariot officers, similar to the Babylonians from Chaldea, where they had been born.

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:

- These paintings must have been stunning...idols with ornate belts, with turbans on their heads, looking like Babylonian princes

16 And when she saw them she lusted after them and sent messengers to them in Chaldea.

16 When she saw them she lusted after them and sent messengers to them in Chaldea.

16 "She lusted after them when she saw them, so she sent messengers to summon them from Chaldea.

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

- God made the object of their sinful desire the instrument of their punishment. It was Jerusalem that solicited the Chaldeans, not the Chaldeans soliciting her.

— Jerusalem reversed the typical practice of prostitutes...instead of waiting for customers to come to her, she proactively solicited them, eager to commit adultery with them.

17 And the Babylonians came to her to the bed of love and defiled her with their obscene practice. And when she had been defiled by them, she turned away from them in disgust.

17 The Babylonians came to her to the bed of love and defiled her with their harlotry. And when she had been defiled by them, she became disgusted with them.

17 The Babylonians came to her love nest and defiled her with their sexual immorality. As a result, she was defiled by them. Even so, she turned away from them in disgust.

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.

- The Babylonians accepted Jerusalem's invitation. They led her to commit adultery with them, defiled her, and eventually Jerusalem became so polluted that her soul turned away from them and she rejected her former lovers.

18 She exposed her obscene practices and exposed her nakedness; then I turned away from her in disgust, just as I had turned away from her sister in disgust.

18 She uncovered her harlotries and uncovered her nakedness; then I became disgusted with her, as I had become disgusted with her sister.

18 She displayed her immorality publicly and stripped herself naked, so I turned away in disgust from her, just as I had turned away in disgust from her sister.

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.

- Just as Jerusalem had turned away from this with whom she had committed adultery, her own Husband turned away from her, just as He had done with her sister Samaria

19 Yet she multiplied her obscene practices, remembering the days of her youth, when she prostituted herself in the land of Egypt.

19 Yet she multiplied her harlotries, remembering the days of her youth, when she played the harlot in the land of Egypt.

19 "Nevertheless, she became even more sexually immoral, even reminiscing about when she was young, when she kept on practicing sexual immorality in the land of Egypt.

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.

- Jerusalem "multiplied her obscene practices" as she recalled her youth, when she was a harlot in Egypt. She only got more and more promiscuous.

20 She lusted after their lovers, whose **flesh** is *like* the flesh of donkeys and whose **discharge** is *like* the discharge of horses.

20 She lusted after their paramours, whose flesh is *like* the flesh of donkeys and whose issue is *like* the issue of horses.

20 She lusted after her paramours, whose genitals are like those of donkeys, and whose emissions are like those of horses.

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

- This verse graphically depicts Jerusalem's intense lust for idols

- "...flesh" - *basar*, refers to genitals

— Jerusalem lusted after idols whose genitals were like those of donkeys

- "...discharge" - *zaram*, means "to pour forth in floods"; in this highly sexualized context, it refers to ejaculation

— So Jerusalem lusted after those whose ejaculations were like those of horses

— The core message is that Jerusalem, like a promiscuous woman drawn to sexual potency, was seduced by the power of Egypt. Historically this came true within Ezekiel's lifetime under King Zedekiah.

In the last 14 years of Judah's history (600-586 BC) she attempted to elicit Egypt's help in her revolt against Babylon. King Jehoiakim rebelled against Babylon in 600 BC after Egypt defeated Babylon (2 Kings 24:1). Judah eagerly grasped Egypt's hollow promises of aid. Zedekiah's final revolt against Babylon in 588 BC came with Egypt's promise of assistance (2 Kings 25:1; Jer 37:5-8; Ezek 29:6-7).

21 So you longed for the outrageous sin of your youth, when the Egyptians handled your breasts because of the breasts of your youth.

21 Thus you longed for the lewdness of your youth, when the Egyptians handled your bosom because of the breasts of your youth.

21 Think about the wickedness that you practiced when you were young, when the Egyptians fondled your breasts, the breasts of your youth."

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

- Jerusalem longed for the lewdness of her youth, when her bosom and young breasts were fondled in Egypt

Verses 11-21 illustrate that Judah failed to heed the lessons from Israel's sins and subsequent punishment. Instead, the nation displayed even greater perversity and culpability by forming covert political alliances with Assyria and Egypt. These alliances led to religious apostasy and the adoption of foreign pantheons. Thus, both sisters exhibited disobedience to God's revealed will, but Judah did so more openly and without remorse. Consequently, God severed His ties with the Southern Kingdom, as He had previously done with Israel.

#### (c) Their Judgment (23:22-49)

##### (1) First judgment Oracle (23:22-27)

**22** "Therefore, Oholibah, **this is what the Lord GOD says:** 'Behold I am going to incite your lovers against you, from whom you turned away in disgust, and I will bring them against you from every side:

**22** "Therefore, O Oholibah, thus says the Lord GOD, 'Behold I will arouse your lovers against you, from whom you were alienated, and I will bring them against you from every side:

**22** "Therefore, Oholibah, this is what the Lord GOD says: 'Look! I'm about to stir up your lovers against you, the ones from whom you've turned away in disgust. I'm going to bring them against you from every direction—

**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;

- This passage (v22-49) outline the judgment that God was about to level against Jerusalem. It is articulated in four distinct oracles (v22-27; v28-31; v32-34; v35-49). Each oracle begins with "this is what the Lord GOD says..."

- "...this is what the Lord GOD says" - the beginning of the first oracle of judgment. It foretells a judgment for Jerusalem's infidelity with foreign lovers.

23 the Babylonians and **all the Chaldeans, Pekod and Shoa and Koa, and all the Assyrians** with them; handsome young men, governors and officials all of them, officers and men of renown, all of them riding on horses.

23 the Babylonians and all the Chaldeans, Pekod and Shoa and Koa, *and* all the Assyrians with them; desirable young men, governors and officials all of them, officers and men of renown, all of them riding on horses.

23 the Babylonians, all the Chaldeans, Pekod, Shoa, Koa, and all of the Assyrians with them. They're all desirable young men, governors, commanders, chariot officers, and famous men, all of them mounted on horses.

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 verse identifies God's agents of judgment, beginning with the Babylonians.
  - "...all the Chaldeans" - then come the Chaldeans (other tribes within the Babylonian Empire, located east of the Euphrates River)
  - "...Pekod" - a powerful Aramaean tribe (Cf. Jer 50:21)
  - "...Shoa" - Assyrian Sutu or Suti, who were nomads who settled east of the Tigris River
  - "...Koa" - Qutu, mentioned on the cylinder of Cyrus, settled along the Babylonian border with Elam and Media
  - "...all the Assyrians" - the rest of the verse further describes them
- This list mirrors the description of Israel and Judah's illicit lovers in v6,12. These former lovers would now be used by God to punish Judah.

24 And they will come against you with weapons, chariots, and wagons, and with a contingent of peoples. They will attack you on every side with shield, buckler, and helmet; and I will commit the judgment to them, and they will judge you according to their customs.

24 They will come against you with weapons, chariots and wagons, and with a company of peoples. They will set themselves against you on every side with buckler and shield and helmet; and I will commit the judgment to them, and they will judge you according to their customs.

24 "They'll invade you with weapons, chariots, wagons, and a vast army. They'll set themselves in place to attack you from every direction with large shields, small shields, and helmets. I'll turn over judgment to them, and they'll punish you according to their own standards.

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.

- Although this judgment was decreed by God, He would delegate its execution to Israel's enemies (v23). God gave these enemies the authority to carry out the punishment of Jerusalem "according to their customs" or legal practices.

25 I will set **My jealousy** against you, so that **they may deal with you in wrath. They will remove your nose and your ears; and your survivors will fall by the sword. They will take your sons and your daughters; and your survivors will be consumed by the fire.**

25 I will set My jealousy against you, that they may deal with you in wrath. They will remove your nose and your ears; and your survivors will fall by the sword. They will take your sons and your daughters; and your survivors will be consumed by the fire.

25 I'll expend my jealousy on you so they'll deal with you in anger. They'll cut off your noses and your ears. Your survivors will die violently. They'll take your sons and daughters away from you, but your survivors will be incinerated.

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.

- "...My jealousy" - God's jealousy was going to be spent in five specific ways, all characteristic of the Assyrian methods for dealing with conquered nations

- "...they may deal with you in wrath" - Judah's enemies would act in wrath against them

- "...They will remove your nose and your ears" - they will completely disfigure Jerusalem's beauty. In Mesopotamia, facial mutilation was a frequent punishment for adultery. Similarly Jerusalem would be rendered unattractive to any more potential lovers.

— A guilty woman would be rendered so grotesque that she would be forever undesirable to anyone else; she would be forced to bear her shame and guilt publicly

- "...your survivors will fall by the sword" - there will be widespread death

- "...They will take your sons and your daughters" - Judah's enemies would capture Jerusalem's sons and daughters and take them into captivity

- "...your survivors will be consumed by the fire" - whatever remained would be destroyed by fire

26 They will also strip you of your clothes and take away your beautiful jewelry.

26 They will also strip you of your clothes and take away your beautiful jewels.

26 They'll strip off your clothes and confiscate your jewelry.

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

- A typical punishment for an adulteress in Ezekiel's day (Cf. v29). Stripping a woman naked was the punishment for adultery, and God intended the same for Jerusalem.

— He would also make sure that her external beauty was taken away, as symbolized by the removal of her jewelry

27 So I will remove from you your outrageous sin and your prostitution *that you brought* from the land of Egypt, so that you will not raise your eyes to them or remember Egypt anymore.'

27 Thus I will make your lewdness and your harlotry *brought* from the land of Egypt to cease from you, so that you will not lift up your eyes to them or remember Egypt anymore.'

27 That's how I'll put an end to your obscene conduct and sexual immorality that you kept on practicing since the day you left the land of Egypt so that you won't look in Egypt's direction or even remember it anymore.'

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.

- The goal of the first oracle judgment was not an end in itself, but rather its purpose was to end Jerusalem's lewdness, which originated all the way back in Egypt

— Once God's judgment and jealousy were fully spent, Israel would no longer remember the place where it all began

## (2) Second judgment Oracle (23:28-31)

28 For **this is what the Lord GOD says**: 'Behold, I am going to hand you over to **those whom you hate**, to those from whom you turned away in disgust.

28 For thus says the Lord GOD, 'Behold, I will give you into the hand of those whom you hate, into the hand of those from whom you were alienated.

28 "This is what the Lord GOD says, 'I'm about to turn you over to the control of those you hate, to the control of those from whom you turned away in disgust.

**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:

- "...this is what the Lord GOD says" - introduces the second oracle, which expands on the concept of, in ancient times, adulteresses were stripped naked and disfigured before being executed as punishment for their sins (Cf. v26)

- "...those whom you hate" - the very people she had learned to hate after committing adultery with them are the same ones that God intended to use to punish her

29 They will **deal with you in hatred**, take all your property, and leave you naked and bare. And the nakedness of **your prostitution will be exposed**, both your outrageous sin and your obscene practices.

29 They will deal with you in hatred, take all your property, and leave you naked and bare. And the nakedness of your harlotries will be uncovered, both your lewdness and your harlotries.



29 They'll deal with you with hatred. They'll take away your productivity, leaving you naked and defenseless, so that the nakedness of your sexual immorality will be uncovered—your licentious sexual immorality.

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 what "strip you of your clothes and take away your beautiful jewelry" (v26) looks like

- "...deal with you in hatred" - the recurring theme of "hatred" in v28-29 is important because it alludes to the fact that these enemies used to be her "lovers" (Cf. v5,9,22). Jerusalem's illicit lovers had become her righteous haters.

- "...your prostitution will be exposed" - Jerusalem's enemies would leave her naked and bare, exposing both her sexual immorality and her licentiousness. Thus, Jerusalem would experience the typical punishment of an adulteress in the ancient world.

30 These things will be done to you because you have adulterously pursued the nations, because you have defiled yourself with their idols.

30 These things will be done to you because you have played the harlot with the nations, because you have defiled yourself with their idols.

30 These things will happen to you because of your sexual immorality that was patterned after what the nations do. You've been defiled by their idols.

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.

- Two reasons given for this judgment: because Jerusalem has "played the harlot with the nations" (through promiscuous political alliances with other nations), and because Jerusalem had "defiled yourself with their idols" (committed spiritual adultery with their idols)

31 You have walked in the way of your sister; therefore I will put her **cup** in your hand.'

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

31 You took the path of your sister, so I'll place her cup in your hand.'

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

- Because Jerusalem committed the same sins as her sister Samaria, she was destined to receive the same punishment

- "...cup" - when used symbolically in Scripture, it is often a figure for God's wrath (Cf. Jer 25:15-17). The cup that Jerusalem had to drink would strip her of all her beauty and lead to her destruction.

(3) Third judgment Oracle (23:32-34)

32 **This is what the Lord GOD says: 'You will drink your sister's cup, Which is deep and wide.** You will be laughed at and held in derision; *Because* it contains much.

32 Thus says the Lord GOD, 'You will drink your sister's cup, Which is deep and wide. You will be laughed at and held in derision; It contains much.

32 "This is what the Lord GOD says: 'You'll drink from your sister's cup, which is both large and deep. You'll become a laughing stock and an object of derision, since the cup is so full!

**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.

- "This is what the Lord GOD says" - an introduction to the third oracle, where God elaborates on the "cup" that Jerusalem would drink (v31). This oracle describes in greater detail what this cup will accomplish and what it signifies.

- "...You will drink your sister's cup" - because Jerusalem's sins mirrored Samaria's sins, they would drink the same cup of judgment

- "...deep and wide" - the size and depth of this cup indicates that it contained a substantial amount of God's wrath and was filled to the brim

33 'You will be filled with drunkenness and grief, A cup of **horror** and desolation, The cup of your sister Samaria.

33 'You will be filled with drunkenness and sorrow, The cup of horror and desolation, The cup of your sister Samaria.

33 You'll be filled with drunkenness and grief. The cup that belongs to your sister Samaria is filled with horror and devastation,

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

- This verse compares Jerusalem to a man who, after consuming too much alcohol, loses control and becomes the subject of ridicule. Similarly, Jerusalem's drunkenness on God's wrath would cause other nations to deride/scorn her.

- "...horror" - *shammah*, means "waste" or "horror"; Jerusalem's drunkenness would lead her to sorrow, as her cup was one of horror

34 'And you will drink it and drain it. Then you will gnaw on its fragments And tear your breasts; for **I have spoken,**' declares the Lord GOD.

34 'You will drink it and drain it. Then you will gnaw its fragments And tear your breasts; for I have spoken,' declares the Lord GOD.

34 but you'll drink from it and drain it completely. As for the vessel, you'll break it to pieces and you'll tear at your breasts, for I've spoken,' declares the Lord GOD.

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.

- This verse further describes the brutality of divine judgment imposed on Jerusalem. Not only would Jerusalem be forced to drink the cup of God's wrath, but to drain it completely, consuming every last bitter drop.

— In fact, Jerusalem would drink of it so eagerly that she would shatter the cup and gnaw on its shards to lick up every last drop. As she did this, she would begin to tear at her breasts in a fit of madness.

- "...I have spoken" - this prophetic word was certain because God Himself had spoken it

#### (4) Fourth judgment Oracle (23:35)

35 **Therefore, this is what the Lord GOD says:** 'Because **you have forgotten Me** and discarded Me behind your back, suffer on your own part *the punishment* for your outrageous sin and your obscene practices.'

35 Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, 'Because you have forgotten Me and cast Me behind your back, bear now the *punishment* of your lewdness and your harlotries.'

35 "Therefore this is what the Lord GOD says: 'Because you abandoned me and threw me behind your back, you will bear the consequences of your obscene conduct and sexual immorality.'

**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.

- "Therefore" - because of the actions described in v22-34

- "...this is what the Lord GOD says" - the fourth oracle, which summarizes the accusations against Jerusalem in the previous three oracles and their resulting consequences

- "...you have forgotten Me" - not through innocent amnesia but as a deliberate act of rebellion. Jerusalem had purposely "discarded God behind their back".

#### (5) Summary of the sins of the Two Sisters (23:36-49)

**36** Moreover, the LORD said to me, "Son of man, will you **judge** Oholah and Oholibah? Then declare to them their abominations.

**36** Moreover, the LORD said to me, "Son of man, will you judge Oholah and Oholibah? Then declare to them their abominations.

**36** Then the LORD spoke to me. "Son of Man, speak out in judgment of both Oholah and Oholibah. Make their detestable practices widely known,

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

- Verses 36-42 are a detailed indictment. There is no comparable arraignment in the Scripture that is more incisive or scathing, and yet so complete.

- "...judge" - to arraign; God asked Ezekiel to announce the charges against Oholah and Oholibah, as if they were in a court of law

37 For they have **committed adultery**, and **blood is on their hands**. So they have committed adultery with their idols, and even **made their sons**, whom they bore to Me, **pass through *the fire*** to them as food.

37 For they have committed adultery, and blood is on their hands. Thus they have committed adultery with their idols and even caused their sons, whom they bore to Me, to pass through *the fire* to them as food.

37 because they've committed adultery, and blood covers their hands. They've also committed adultery with their idols, making their sons born to me to pass through the fire as an offering to them.

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.

- Verses 37-39 summarize the religious adultery committed by both sisters. Notice that there is no question as to their guilt for committing three offenses:

- "...committed adultery" - in violation of Ex 22:20; 23:13; Lev 26:1; Deut 5:6-10; 12:29-32

- "...blood is on their hands" - murder, in violation of Ex 20:13

- "...made their sons...pass through *the fire*" - child sacrifice, in violation of Lev 18:21; 20:1-5

38 Again, **they have done this to Me**: they have defiled My sanctuary **on the same day**, and have profaned My Sabbaths.

38 Again, they have done this to Me: they have defiled My sanctuary on the same day and have profaned My sabbaths.

38 "They've also done this to me: They defiled my sanctuary and profaned my Sabbaths, all at the same time!

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

- "...they have done this to Me" - notice how personally God took these sins against Him; He took them as a personal affront. This underscores the seriousness of these actions.

— Beyond the horrific sins of adultery, murder, and child sacrifice, Samaria and Jerusalem had committed even greater sins by defiling the Temple and profaning His Sabbaths

- "...on the same day" - *bayyom hahu*, on the same day they would sacrifice their children, they would enter the Temple to profane it by worshipping other idols (v39)

39 For when they slaughtered their children for their idols, they entered My sanctuary on the same day to profane it; and behold, this is what they did within My house.

39 For when they had slaughtered their children for their idols, they entered My sanctuary on the same day to profane it; and lo, thus they did within My house.

39 When they killed their sons as offerings to their idols, they brought them to my sanctuary and defiled it. Look what they've done with my Temple!

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.

- Describes in detail how the the people would descend into the Valley of Hinnom to worship idols and sacrifice their children, then head back into Jerusalem, into the Temple, on the same day, without even a night passing, to worship foreign idols

**40 "Furthermore,** they have even sent for men who come from a great distance, to whom **a messenger was sent; and behold, they came**—for whom you bathed, put makeup on your eyes, and adorned yourselves with jewelry;

**40** "Furthermore, they have even sent for men who come from afar, to whom a messenger was sent; and lo, they came—for whom you bathed, painted your eyes and decorated yourselves with ornaments;

**40** "In addition, they sent messengers for men to come from afar. When they arrived, you bathed yourself for them, painted your eyes, adorned yourself with jewelry,

**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,

- "Furthermore" - Ezekiel will now refer to a second form of adultery: their flirtation with foreign nations

- "...a messenger was sent" - Samaria and Jerusalem had sent emissaries to their foreign "lovers" seeking to establish political alliances

- "...and behold, they came" - this strategy seemed successful to them, for a time

— As Samaria and Jerusalem saw these foreign emissaries coming, they attempted to beautify themselves to ensure that these alliances would hold.

41 and you sat on a splendid couch with a table arranged in front of it on which you had set **My incense and My oil**.

41 and you sat on a splendid couch with a table arranged before it on which you had set My incense and My oil.

41 then sat down on an elegant bed. A table was arranged in front of it, on which you set out my incense and oil.

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

- "...My incense and My oil" - God declared ownership of these items, which were meant for divine and proper worship, but His children used them as payment to their illicit lovers

42 And **the sound of a carefree multitude** was with her; and heavy drinkers were brought from the wilderness with people from the multitude of humanity. And they put **bracelets** on the wrists of the women and **beautiful crowns** on their heads.

42 The sound of a carefree multitude was with her; and drunkards were brought from the wilderness with men of the common sort. And they put bracelets on the hands of the women and beautiful crowns on their heads.

42 The sound of a carefree multitude accompanied her. Men from a multitude of nations were coming—including Sabeans from the wilderness, adorned with bracelets on their hands and beautiful crowns on their heads.

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

- "...the sound of a carefree multitude" - the sound of their noisy crowds was that of thoughtless concern in her midst

- "...bracelets...beautiful crowns" - common items given in payment to prostitutes

**43 "Then I said concerning her who was worn out by adulteries, 'Will they now commit adultery with her when she is *like this*?'"**

**43 "Then I said concerning her who was worn out by adulteries, 'Will they now commit adultery with her when she is *thus*?'"**

43 "After she had worn herself out by her adulterous behavior, I asked her, 'Will they continue with their sexual immorality and with their prostitution?'

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

- "...worn out by adulteries" - implies that the accusation of spiritual adultery had been justified throughout Israel's history. Samaria and Jerusalem had always been guilty of this sin, and their fornications had worn them out.

- "...Will they now commit adultery with her when she is *like this*?" - the question is best interpreted as evidence that the sisters' illicit lovers took advantage of them.

— They treated Samaria and Jerusalem as prostitutes because that's exactly what they were

44 But they went in to her as they would go in to a prostitute. This is how they went in to Oholah and to Oholibah, the lewd women.

44 But they went in to her as they would go in to a harlot. Thus they went in to Oholah and to Oholibah, the lewd women.

44 They've gone to her, like men do, to have sex with a prostitute. They had sex with Oholah and Oholibah, those licentious women.

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.

- The sister's illicit lovers had sex with them—not as married people would—but as they would with a prostitute

45 But they, **righteous people, will judge them** with the **judgment of adulteresses** and with the **judgment of women who shed blood**, because they are adulteresses and blood is on their hands.

45 But they, righteous men, will judge them with the judgment of adulteresses and with the judgment of women who shed blood, because they are adulteresses and blood is on their hands.

45 Righteous men will judge them with punishments fit for adulterers and for those who shed blood, because they're adulterers with blood on their hands."

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.

- In light of the sins of the sisters, this verse describes the basis for their condemnation

- "...righteous people, will judge them" - righteous men would serve as their judges, emphasizing the righteousness of the verdict rather than the identity of the judges

- "...judgment of adulteresses" - these judges would evaluate the sisters according to the law of adulteresses (Cf. Lev 20:10)

- "...judgment of women who shed blood" - reflects the murders that the sisters committed

### **The Coming Invasion**

**46** "For this is what the Lord GOD says: 'Bring up a contingent against them and turn them over to terror and plunder.

**46** "For thus says the Lord GOD, 'Bring up a company against them and give them over to terror and plunder.

**46** This is what the Lord GOD says: "Bring an army against them and deliver them over to terror and plunder.

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



- God's judgment would consist of Him bringing a contingent against them that would throw them into chaos and disarray, then plunder them

47 The contingent will stone them with stones and cut them down with their swords; they will kill their sons and their daughters and burn their houses with fire.

47 The company will stone them with stones and cut them down with their swords; they will slay their sons and their daughters and burn their houses with fire.

47 Then the army will stone them with stones and cut them to pieces with their swords. They'll kill their sons and daughters and incinerate their houses.

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.

- This contingent would stone the two sisters, executing the punishment for an adulteress caught in the act (Cf. Deut 22:21)

— Furthermore, the contingent would cut the sisters down with their swords, kill their sons and daughters, and destroy their houses by fire

48 So I will eliminate outrageous conduct from the land, so that all women will take warning and not commit outrageous sin as you have done.

48 Thus I will make lewdness cease from the land, that all women may be admonished and not commit lewdness as you have done.

48 I'll cause obscene conduct to stop throughout the land, because all the women will be admonished not to practice their obscene conduct.

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

- The result of this judgment/punishment would be that all lewdness would cease in the land of Israel, and women everywhere would be warned and no longer imitate her sinfulness

49 Your outrageous conduct will be **repaid to you**, and you will bear the guilt for your idols; so you will know that I am the Lord GOD."

49 Your lewdness will be requited upon you, and you will bear the penalty of *worshipping* your idols; thus you will know that I am the Lord GOD."

49 You'll receive the consequences for your obscene conduct and bear the punishment for your sins of idolatry. Then you'll know that I am the Lord GOD."

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.

- "...repaid to you" - Israel would receive recompense (just penalty) for her lewdness, and bear the consequences of her idolatry, illustrating the principle of what you sow you will

also reap

- This would be accomplished in order that Israel would know that He is the Lord GOD