

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

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

Verse 2

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

Verse 5

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

In this chapter there are many of what we would call indelicate expressions, because a parallel is run between idolatry and prostitution, and the circumstances of the latter illustrate the peculiarities of the former. In such cases, perhaps, the matter alone was given to the prophet, and he was left to use his own language, and amplify as he saw good. Ezekiel was among the Jews what Juvenal was among the Romans, - a rough reprovcr of the most abominable vices. They both spoke of things as they found them; stripped vice naked, and scourged it publicly. The original is still more rough than the translation; and surely there is no need of a comment to explain imagery that is but too generally understood. I have said enough on Ezekiel 16, and to that I must refer the reader. It is true that there are a few things here in the shade that might be illustrated by anatomy; and it would not be difficult to do it: but they are not necessary to salvation, and I shall not take off the covering. They were sufficiently understood by those for whose use they were originally designed.

Verse 6

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

Verse 14

Men pourtrayed upon the wall - See on Ezekiel 8:10 (note).

Verse 20

She doted upon their paramours - *אֲחֹלָיִם וְאֲחֹלִיבָה* (pillagsheyhem), their harlots or concubines. Anciently harlot meant in our language either the male or female prostitute.

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

Verse 23

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

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

Verse 25

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

Who has counselled thee to cut off the adulterer's nose?

Women were thus treated in Egypt. See Calmet.

Verse 26

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

Verse 32

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

Verse 34

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

Tunc vero rupique sinus, et pectora planxi.

Ovid's Ep. 5.

Verse 38

They have defiled my sanctuary - By placing idols there.

Verse 40

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

Verse 41

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

Verse 42

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

Verse 45

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

Verse 47

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

Verse 48

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

Verse 49

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