

Reading Guide for Ezekiel 23

This chapter is an allegory portraying two sisters, Oholah and Oholibah, who have both been unfaithful to their husband. The first part of the allegory (vv. 5-10) tells the story of Samaria (Oholah), the capital of Israel. She turned her back on the Lord by making an alliance with Assyria, and were thus subsequently conquered by them in 722 B.C.

Jerusalem (Oholibah) throughout her history also sought alliances with foreign nations, namely, Assyria, Babylon, and Egypt (vv. 11-27). Around the time of the writing of this oracle, Zedekiah broke his treaty of vassalage with Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, in order to form an alliance with Egypt, in hopes to gain independence once again. The plan failed, prompting Nebuchadnezzar to retaliate by besieging Jerusalem in 588 B.C. and eventually conquering it two years later.

Jerusalem had committed the same sin as Samaria and were thus doomed to face the same consequences. She had to drink the cup that Samaria drank and bear her disgrace (vv. 28-35). Finally, Ezekiel is called to judge both cities for their idolatry and political corruption (vv. 36-49).

Message-reception Formula (23:1)

Introduction to Oholah and Oholibah (23:2-4)

Judgment Oracle Against Oholah (23:5-10)

Accusation: Samaria's Alliance with Assyria (vv. 5-8)

Sentence: Samaria was Conquered by Assyria (vv. 9-10)

Judgment Oracle Against Oholibah (23:11-27)

Accusation: Jerusalem's Alliances with the Nations (vv. 11-21)

Alliance with Assyria (vv. 11-13)

Alliance with Babylon (vv. 14-18)

Alliance with Egypt (vv. 19-21)

Sentence: Jerusalem will be Conquered by Babylon (vv. 22-27)

Further Sentence (23:28-35)

Jerusalem's Shame will be Exposed (vv. 28-31)

Jerusalem will Drink Samaria's Cup (vv. 32-34)

Jerusalem will Bear Their Lewdness (vv. 35)

Judgment Oracle Against Oholah and Oholibah (23:36-49a)

Command to Judge Oholah and Oholibah (vv. 36)

Accusation: Cultic and Political Sins Against God (vv. 37-45)

Cultic Sins (vv. 37-39)

Political Sins (vv. 40-44)

Pronouncement of Coming Judgment (v. 45)

Sentence: They will be Conquered (vv. 46-49a)

Recognition Formula (23:49b)