

Ezekiel Chapter 4

Ezekiel 4:1 "Thou also, son of man, take thee a tile, and lay it before thee, and portray upon it the city, [even] Jerusalem:"

Beginning with this verse and continuing through (chapter 24), Ezekiel fulfills his divinely appointed task, given (in chapter 3), of being a watchman to the house of Israel.

Israel's destruction is predicted in these chapters, and the reasons for it are given. Remember that Ezekiel had been taken into captivity (in 597 B.C.), and prophesied these chapters in Babylon before the destruction of Jerusalem took place (in 586 B.C.). Four key signs of the certainty of judgment are used (in chapters 4 and 5). The first is the sign of the tile, or brick. Ezekiel was instructed to draw an outline of the city of Jerusalem on the brick, and then build ramps around it as a picture of its inevitable capture. It amounted to a model of Nebuchadnezzar's later destruction of the city.

We see from this a similar object lesson as when Isaiah walked naked and barefoot 3 years. And again (in chapter 27 of Jeremiah), the lesson about the wooden yokes that Jeremiah wore around his neck, as a sign to these people.

Sometimes when words fail, a picture will help the people see, as well as hear. All of the things mentioned were showing, in the physical, the condition of the people in the spiritual. This tile was like a drawing pad. The picture drawn on the tile was to be Jerusalem.

Ezekiel 4:2 "And lay siege against it, and build a fort against it, and cast a mound against it; set the camp also against it, and set [battering] rams against it round about."

We see the picture was to depict Jerusalem under siege by Nebuchadnezzar. The tile is a sizable brick, used in construction.

We saw in the book of Jeremiah, where this very thing really happened. This picture was to shock them into believing and repenting.

Ezekiel 4:3 "Moreover take thou unto thee an iron pan, and set it [for] a wall of iron between thee and the city: and set thy face against it, and it shall be besieged, and thou shalt lay siege against it. This [shall be] a sign to the house of Israel."

This "iron pan" that was set up between Ezekiel and the city, is to symbolize the impossibility of these people reaching God after the siege has begun. This is judgment that separates them from God. In this particular instance, Ezekiel is representing God to them. Ezekiel was to look at the pan, and not to the city. This meant that, at that point, they could not reach the face of God. The sign they should see in this, is that they have put a barrier between themselves and God. Their sins had put the barrier there.

Ezekiel 4:4 "Lie thou also upon thy left side, and lay the iniquity of the house of Israel upon it: [according] to the number of the days that thou shalt lie upon it thou shalt bear their iniquity."

Lying on his side and likely facing north illustrated God's applying judgment to Israel, the northern 10 tribes.

This is saying that the 10 tribes were even worldlier than Judah's 2 tribes. The left side represented the 10 northern tribes. The fact that Ezekiel lay on his side this lengthy time, shows them a physical picture of what will happen to them in captivity.

Ezekiel's action was not to represent the time of Israel's sinning, but the time of their punishment.

It is not necessary to assume that Ezekiel was in the prone position all the time. It was doubtless part of each day, as his need for preparing food (in verse 9 indicates).

Ezekiel 4:5 "For I have laid upon thee the years of their iniquity, according to the number of the days, three hundred and ninety days: so shalt thou bear the iniquity of the house of Israel."

This act of Ezekiel represented the previous centuries of Israel and Judah's spiritual failure. One day for each year.

As a consequence of His people's idolatry and immorality, divine judgment resulting in the destruction of Jerusalem was at hand.

During the 430 year period (between 1036 and 606 B.C.), when the first of the three groups of Jews were led away into captivity, the nation's history was marred by many evils, which the prophets denounced.

Ezekiel 4:6 "And when thou hast accomplished them, lie again on thy right side, and thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days: I have appointed thee each day for a year."

The forty year period, especially for Judah, may indicate the worst times under Manasseh's reign, prior to his repentance.

Ezekiel performed this symbolic act (around the year 593 B.C.), nearly 5 years after the second deportation of Jews to Babylon, in which he was taken along with King Jehoiachin (in 597 B.C.).

Ezekiel 4:7 "Therefore thou shalt set thy face toward the siege of Jerusalem, and thine arm [shall be] uncovered, and thou shalt prophesy against it."

"The extended arm that was uncovered" represents the fact that God will reach out His arm against Jerusalem. This is also a symbol for being ready for action, as a soldier would do.

Ezekiel 4:8 "And, behold, I will lay bands upon thee, and thou shalt not turn thee from one side to another, till thou hast ended the days of thy siege."

This symbolizes the impossibility of the Jews being able to shake off their impending judgment. They will have no relief from the siege.

Ezekiel 4:9 "Take thou also unto thee wheat, and barley, and beans, and lentiles, and millet, and fitches, and put them in one vessel, and make thee bread thereof, [according] to the number of the days that thou shalt lie upon thy side, three hundred and ninety days shalt thou eat thereof."

This is showing the famine that happens during this terrible 18 month siege of Jerusalem which begins in 587 and ends in 586 BC. He would have to have something to eat, but it would be a very meager allotment. This would be enough to survive on, but nothing else.

The famine will be great during the siege and the scarcity of food during the 18 months made necessary the mixing of all kinds of grain for bread.

Ezekiel 4:10 "And thy meat which thou shalt eat [shall be] by weight, twenty shekels a day: from time to time shalt thou eat it."

The 20 shekels would weigh about 8 ounces. Eight ounces of food is very little for a whole day, but you could survive on it. Meat is speaking of food, not flesh of an animal in the verse above.

Ezekiel 4:11 "Thou shalt drink also water by measure, the sixth part of an hin: from time to time shalt thou drink."

This is to show that there will be a shortage of water during the siege, as well. The water supply will be so short; each drop drunk will be measured.

A hin would be a little less than a quart. This seems to indicate that Ezekiel is to drink about 4 to 5 ounces of water 6 times a day.

Ezekiel 4:12 "And thou shalt eat it [as] barley cakes, and thou shalt bake it with dung that cometh out of man, in their sight."

Generally, they would cook their food with wood chips, but there would be no wood to cook with. This again, shows the severity of the siege. Sometimes on cattle drives men use dried dung of cattle (chips), to cook with. This is not what is spoken of here, but human chips.

Dried animal dung is still used for fuel in the Middle East, but the use of human excrement would be both repulsive and polluting.

Ezekiel 4:13 "And the LORD said, Even thus shall the children of Israel eat their defiled bread among the Gentiles, whither I will drive them."

Bread was baked on hot stones heated by human waste because no other fuel was available. This was repulsive and polluting and the Lord calls it “defiled bread”.

The problem is, in war there is no choice. They were captives. They would have no choice, but to cook with whatever was available.

This is such a change from the bread that fell from heaven to feed them on their way to the Promised Land. They have angered God to the extent, that He will not even provide bread for them.

They will have to get it the best way they can. They will be driven out of their land of milk and honey.

Ezekiel 4:14 "Then said I, Ah Lord GOD! behold, my soul hath not been polluted: for from my youth up even till now have I not eaten of that which dieth of itself, or is torn in pieces; neither came there abominable flesh into my mouth."

This is Ezekiel speaking. He knows the law about unclean food very well, since he is a priest. He had kept God's laws, and he did not want to ruin it here with this abominable food.

Ezekiel 4:15 "Then he said unto me, Lo, I have given thee cow's dung for man's dung, and thou shalt prepare thy bread therewith."

Ezekiel, like Daniel, had convictions to be undefiled even in his food. God permitted fuel or dried cow chips for cooking his food in gracious deference to His spokesman's sensitivity.

This is to keep Ezekiel from feeling personal guilt from eating defiled food.

Ezekiel 4:16 "Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, behold, I will break the staff of bread in Jerusalem: and they shall eat bread by weight, and with care; and they shall drink water by measure, and with astonishment:"

This is an explanation that the same thing that happened to the 10 tribes, will happen to Jerusalem, as well. There will be a shortage of food and water here, the same as with the 10 tribes. The astonishment will be in the fact that God will not provide food and water for them.

Ezekiel 4:17 "That they may want bread and water, and be astonished one with another, and consume away for their iniquity."

They were soon to have neither bread nor water in any amount, and they were to grieve over the famine and their iniquity.

The reason for the famine and the shortage of water, is because of the sins they have committed. It will get so severe, that they will do anything to get the food and water they want.

This is punishment that comes upon them for the worship of false gods. Many of them will starve to death.

Ezekiel Chapter 4 Questions

1. What does God call Ezekiel in verse 1?
2. What was the tile like?
3. What was he to write on it?
4. How long had Isaiah walked naked and barefoot?
5. What had Jeremiah done, as a sign to the people?
6. What is verse 2 describing?
7. What did the "iron pan" symbolize?
8. What did lying on the left side symbolize?
9. How long was Ezekiel to lie on his left side?
10. What did the days he laid on his side symbolize?
11. The time was more _____ than _____.
12. What did the right side symbolize?
13. Who were represented in this?
14. "Forty" is a symbolic time of _____.
15. How long was Judah actually in captivity?
16. What did the "extended uncovered arm" show us?
17. Why can Ezekiel not take relief by moving?
18. What is verse 9 speaking of?
19. How much is 20 shekels of food?
20. How much is the sixth part of an hin?
21. What was he to bake his food with?
22. What one request did Ezekiel make of God?

23. How did God answer him?

24. What was the reason for the famine?