

Book of Ezekiel

Chapter 4

Theme: Judgment of Jerusalem

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McGee Introduction: In chapters 4 and 5 Ezekiel is going to use certain signs and act out certain parables before the people. At this time Jerusalem was not yet destroyed, and the false prophets were telling the people of Israel that they were going to have peace. They were saying that the Jews already in Babylonian captivity would return to their land shortly, but Ezekiel is going to confirm the word of Jeremiah, who had told them they would not be going back and that Jerusalem would be destroyed.

G. K. Chesterton writing in the early twentieth century said, “This is the age of pacifism, but it is not the age of peace.” Throughout history man has engaged in fifteen thousand wars and he has signed some eight thousand peace treaties; yet during five or six thousand years of history he has never enjoyed more than two to three hundred years of true peace. Man is a warlike creature, whether he likes to think so or not. Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 5:3, “For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.” May I say to you, there is only one Prince of Peace, the Lord Jesus Christ.¹

Ezekiel’s first set of prophetic acts were as much visual as verbal. He had an uncomfortable message to bring to the people of Jerusalem: they were to come under siege. Furthermore, the siege would be so long that food would become scarce. A third of the people would die of starvation or disease. Another third would die in fighting around the city. Most of the remainder would be dispersed and only a few would remain.

In order to convey this grim message Ezekiel was to use a striking method. He was to symbolize the siege. It seems that he lost the power of normal speech at this stage, and would only be able to speak when he had an oracle to declare (3:26–27). This partial loss of speech continued until news of the fall of Jerusalem reached him (33:22; *cf.* 24:27). There would be other enacted messages too (12:1–16; 17–20; 24:15–27), but this first one must have established his reputation as one of the odder prophets of Israel.

We might find Ezekiel’s method of conveying his message unorthodox, even amusing or embarrassing. However, it is more important to communicate the message than to preserve the popular image of the speaker.²

A fourfold commission followed the divine call. The emphasis in each was on Ezekiel’s obligation to speak the word of the Lord. Each command, however, revealed a slightly different aspect of his work. Ezekiel was commissioned as a preacher, an observer, a watchman, and a prisoner.³

¹McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (3:448). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

cf. compare

²Carson, D. A. (1994). *New Bible commentary : 21st century edition*. Rev. ed. of: The new Bible commentary. 3rd ed. / edited by D. Guthrie, J.A. Motyer. 1970. (4th ed.) (Eze 3:22). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill., USA: Inter-Varsity Press.

³Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Eze 3:4–27). Joplin, Mo.: College Press.

The prophets of Israel employed the technique of action parables in order to attract attention to their message and underscore the main points which they wished to impress on the minds of their audience. Ezekiel used this technique more than any other Old Testament prophet. As he inaugurated his ministry Ezekiel used a series of dramatic actions to dramatize various predictions regarding the siege of Jerusalem.⁴

God against Jerusalem. Commissioned, equipped, and positioned, Ezekiel now receives his first complex of oracles.

God against Jerusalem Enacted. Poetry is typically the vehicle for prophetic oracles—but not here. Ezekiel is called upon to perform “street theater”: actions (rather than words) that convey a divine message. In most cases in Ezekiel, like this one, only the instructions are recorded, and not the report of the performance and its reception.

EZEKIEL'S INITIAL WARNINGS CHS. 4—7

In this section, Ezekiel grouped several symbolic acts that pictured the destruction of Jerusalem (4:1—5:4) and several discourses that he delivered on the subject of Jerusalem's destruction (5:5—7:27). Most of the exiles believed that the Jews who had gone into captivity would return to the Promised Land soon and that God would not allow the Babylonians to destroy Jerusalem and the temple. Ezekiel presented a very different picture of the future.⁵

Dramatizations of the siege of Jerusalem chs. 4—5

The Lord had shut Ezekiel's mouth (3:26), so the first prophecies he delivered were not spoken messages but acted-out parables (cf. 1 Kings 11:30; 22:11; 2 Kings 13:17; Isa. 20:2-4; Jer. 13:1-14; 19:1-10; Acts 21:10-11). Ezekiel evidently appeared somewhat like a mime doing street theater as he dramatized a message without speaking a word.

"The symbolic actions during the prophet's inability to speak were testimonies to the past wickedness and chastisement of the house of Israel (the whole nation), and prophetic of a coming siege. They are therefore intermediate between the siege of 2 Ki. 24:10-16, at which time Ezekiel was carried to Babylon, and the siege of 2 Ki. 25:1-11, eleven years later."⁶

⁴ Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Eze 4:1—5:4). Joplin, Mo.: College Press.

⁵ Constable's Notes on Ezekiel, 2010 edition

⁶ The New Schofield p. 841

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:

[tile] - was the kind used in his day for writing things on, a sort of clay tablet.

[Thou also, son of man, take thee a tile, and lay it before thee ...] This is the 3rd prophecy in Ezekiel (Ezekiel 4:1-17, fulfilled). The next prophecy is in Ezekiel 5:1.

Seven Predictions—Fulfilled (Dake):

1. The children of Israel will eat defiled bread among the Gentiles where I have driven them (Ezekiel 4:13).
2. I will break the staff of bread in Jerusalem (Ezekiel 4:16).
3. They will eat bread by weight and with care.
4. They will drink water by measure and with astonishment.
5. They will want bread and water (Ezekiel 4:17).
6. They will be astonished one with another.
7. They will consume away in their iniquity.⁷

Much of this prophecy was in pantomime portraying the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar which was soon to take place, as recorded in 2 Kings 25.

Sixteen Things in Pantomime (Dake):

1. Take a tile and lay it before you. Portray Jerusalem on it and lay siege against it (Ezekiel 4:1-2).
2. Build a fort against it (Ezekiel 4:2).
3. Cast a mount against it.
4. Set a camp against it.
5. Set battering rams against it.
6. Take an iron pan and set it up for a wall between you and the city (Ezekiel 4:3).
7. Set your face against it.
8. Besiege it.
9. Lie upon your left side and bear the iniquity of Israel 390 days (Ezekiel 4:4-5).
10. Lie upon your right side and bear the iniquity of Judah 40 days (Ezekiel 4:6).
11. Uncover your arm and prophesy against Jerusalem (Ezekiel 4:7).
12. Do not turn from side to side until you have ended the siege (Ezekiel 4:8).
13. Take wheat, barley, beans, lentils, millet, and fitches, and put them in a vessel; make bread for 390 days and eat thereof (Ezekiel 4:9).
14. Make your meat by weight of 20 shekels a day (Ezekiel 4:10).
15. Drink also water by measure, a quart a day for 390 days (Ezekiel 4:11).
16. Eat it (the food) as barley cakes and bake it with man's dung (Ezekiel 4:12).⁸

⁷ Dake Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

⁸ Dake Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

[tile] Ancient Records (Dake)

Assyrian and Babylonian records were kept on sculptured slabs of stone and on pottery. There were also cylinders, some barrelshaped, and some hexagonal or octagonal. These were hollow, made of fine, thin, strong terra cotta, from 1.5 to 3 feet high. They were covered with close writing which was often in such small letters that it required a magnifying glass to read it. They were placed at corners of the temples, which is where many have been discovered; and the writing, which was done in columns, contained histories of the kings who reigned when the temples were built. In addition to these, clay tablets of various sizes were made and covered entirely with writing and pictorial representations. This no doubt was the kind of tile Ezekiel used, as here (Ezekiel 4:1). The characters were likely marked on the clay in its moist state and while still in the frame, with a sharp edged bronze stylus about a foot long, and then the clay was baked. Such was the perfection of manufacture of this kind that many of them have been preserved for us to this day without decay, some being 3,000 to 4,000 years old. They vary in color either because of varying lengths of time they were in the kiln, or perhaps because colors were mixed with the clay. Some are bright brown, others pale yellow, pink, red, or a very dark tint—nearly black. Some are unglazed, others coated with a hard white enamel.

Clarke: Take thee a tile—A tile, such as we use in covering houses, will give us but a very inadequate notion of those used anciently; and also appear very insufficient for the figures which the prophet was commanded to pourtray on it. A brick is most undoubtedly meant; yet, even the larger dimensions here, as to thickness, will not help us through the difficulty, unless we have recourse to the ancients, who have spoken of the dimensions of the bricks commonly used in building. Palladius, *De Re Rustica*, lib. 6 c. 12, is very particular on this subject “Let the bricks be two feet long, one foot broad, and four inches thick.” Edit. Gesner, vol. 3 p. 144. On such a surface as this the whole siege might be easily pourtrayed. There are some brick-bats before me which were brought from the ruins of ancient Babylon, which have been made of clay and straw kneaded together and baked in the sun; one has been more than four inches thick, and on one side it is deeply impressed with characters; others are smaller, well made, and finely impressed on one side with Persepolitan characters. These have been for inside or ornamental work; to such bricks the prophet most probably alludes.

But the tempered clay out of which the bricks were made might be meant here; of this substance he might spread out a sufficient quantity to receive all his figures. The figures were

- 1 .Jerusalem.
2. A fort.
3. A mount.
4. The camp of the enemy.
5. Battering rams, and such like engines, round about.
6. A wall round about the city, between it and the besieging army.⁹

⁹ Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Old Testament

LAN: Ezekiel acted out the coming siege and fall of Jerusalem before it actually happened. God gave Ezekiel specific instructions about what to do and say and how to do and say it. Each detail had a specific meaning. Often we ignore or disregard the smaller details of God's Word, thinking God probably doesn't care. Like Ezekiel, we should want to obey God completely, even in the details.¹⁰

McGee: "A tile" in that day meant a brick. This was their writing material; the Babylonians used clay bricks on which they kept their records. Many, many of these bricks have been found, and they have writing upon them. They are almost square, about fourteen by twelve inches in size.

What Ezekiel was to do was to draw the city of Jerusalem on the brick (I do not know just how he did it), and then he was to break the brick to show that the city was going to be destroyed.

BKC: On a clay tablet Ezekiel drew an outline of **the city of Jerusalem**. The "clay tablet" could refer to a soft clay tablet used by the Babylonians for a writing pad, or it could refer to a large sun-baked brick, the major building material used in Babylon (cf. Gen. 11:3). It seems better to see the word used in its more normal sense of "brick." The shape of Jerusalem was distinctive so Ezekiel's sketch of it would be recognized immediately.¹¹

Though mute, Ezekiel was to declare a message in mime for the city of Jerusalem. Ezekiel scratched either the city map or a view of the skyline of Jerusalem upon the "clay tablet," a sunbaked mud brick commonly used in writing. This was the first of a series of symbolic acts, found in Ezek 4:1-6:7, which were part of his messages to the exiles. Such symbolic acts were one of the ways that the prophets communicated their messages. Jeremiah wore a yoke about his neck (Jer 27:1, 2). Isaiah walked "naked and barefoot" for three years (Isa 20:3).¹²

Chuck Smith: Now this is a brick, and it's about twelve inches by fourteen inches. The archeologists have uncovered thousands of these bricks there in the area of Babylon. This is what they wrote their records on. And their libraries were full of these tiles or bricks. They were a clay brick and they would write, they would scratch in these clay bricks. And so the Lord is telling him to take one of these drawing boards, one of these drawing pads, and draw a picture of Jerusalem and then draw a siege against Jerusalem.¹³

¹⁰ Life Application Notes
cf. *confer*, compare

¹¹ Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary: An exposition of the scriptures* (1:1234). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

¹² Believer's Study Bible

¹³ Chuck Smith, Ezeikiel Sermon Notes, Calvary Chapel, Costa Mesa, CA

Ezekiel 4:2

And lay siege against it, and build a fort against it, and cast a mount against it; set the camp also against it, and set *battering* rams against it round about.

ESV: These verses describe a complete **siege** in miniature; **brick** was the common building material in Babylon, not Jerusalem. The fivefold repetition of **against it** strikes an insistent note.¹⁴

Some believe that Ezekiel did this in some public place. He set this up like a graphic model of prophecy, a sort of Sunday school lesson to dramatize to the kids. God was using Ezekiel to do the very obvious thing, to get it through their heads that Jerusalem was going to be besieged and plundered.

Dake: [And lay siege against it, and build a fort against it, and cast a mount against it; set the camp also against it, and set *battering* rams against it round about] The prophet was to set the tile a distance from himself and go through the stages of a siege against a real city, all around the tile. Then he was to set up an iron pan to represent a wall between himself and the city thus portrayed, set his face against it, and throw rocks and other things at the tile back of the iron pan until it was destroyed. This pantomime symbolized the coming siege of Jerusalem and the complete destruction of Judah and the city (Ezekiel 4:2-3,7-8,16-17).

Clarke: Battering rams— *carim* This is the earliest account we have of this military engine. It was a long beam with a head of brass, like the head and horns of a ram, whence its name. It was hung by chains or ropes, between two beams, or three legs, so that it could admit of being drawn backward and forward some yards. Several stout men, by means of ropes, pulled it as far back as it could go, and then, suddenly letting it loose, it struck with great force against the wall which it was intended to batter and bring down. This machine was not known in the time of Homer, as in the siege of Troy there is not the slightest mention of such. And the first notice we have of it is here, where we see that it was employed by Nebuchadnezzar in the siege of Jerusalem, A.M. 3416. It was afterwards used by the Carthaginians at the siege of Gades, as Vitruvius notes, lib. 10 c. 19, in which he gives a circumstantial account of the invention, fabrication, use, and improvement of this machine. It was for the want of a machine of this kind, that the ancient sieges lasted so long; they had nothing with which to beat down or undermine the walls.

¹⁴ ESV Bible Study Notes, ESV Bible

BKC: God then told Ezekiel to lay siege to the brick. Because Jerusalem was a well-fortified city, it would take Babylon months to capture it. The purpose of a siege was to starve out the enemies and wear them down by halting their flow of food, supplies, and weapons.

In depicting the attack on Jerusalem, Ezekiel may have used small wooden models or clods of dirt to represent the army of Babylon circling the city and laying siege to it. He first erected **siege** works against his "city." These were earthen towers or walls of dirt erected all around Jerusalem (cf. 2 Kings 25:1; Jer. 52:4). They protected the offensive army from arrows fired from the wall and gave the attackers additional height from which to shoot arrows over the city wall.

Ezekiel was also to build a ramp up to the brick city. The ramp provided a relatively smooth incline up which siege towers and battering rams could be pushed. Also the ramp allowed the attackers to get above the bedrock and large foundation stones of the city so the smaller and more vulnerable upper stones could be reached by the battering rams.

To prevent reinforcements and supplies from coming in and to keep survivors from slipping out, an attacking army would set up camps around the besieged city. Ezekiel did the same on his small-scale model. Later Nebuchadnezzar's army surrounded Jerusalem during the siege and allowed the city no means of relief or escape. Once everything was positioned the battering rams were brought forward to begin their assault. Their constant hammering gradually weakened the city's walls.¹⁵

Lay siege: The city of Jerusalem would come under *siege*, meaning that the Babylonians would surround the city and cut off its outside supplies. The purpose was to starve the inhabitants into submission (see vv. 9–12; 16, 17). By his symbolic drawing, Ezekiel may have been commanded to do what other "prophets" of the nations might do. That is, the hired "prophets" of the pagan nations might use such a drawing as a device for invoking the gods to bring about the event graphically described. In Ezekiel's case, the drawing was the opposite of what the people wanted. As they sat in captivity, the worst news would have been that the holy city had been destroyed. In this case, the drawing showed the people the horrible truth of what God already had sovereignly ordained.¹⁶

ESV: 1–8 This complex of instructions is not dated. Although the "vision reprise" in the preceding section links it most naturally back to the beginning of the book, other terms (e.g., "cords" in 3:25; cf. 4:8) join it closely with this passage. If so, these symbolic actions would then belong to the same time frame as the prophet's commissioning (about 593 b.c.). In any case this passage ought to be dated before the events of 24:1 (roughly 587 b.c.), when the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem is reported to Ezekiel.

cf. *confer*, compare

¹⁵Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (1:1234). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

¹⁶The Nelson Study Bible

Constable: The Lord instructed Ezekiel to construct a model of Jerusalem under siege. He was to build a model of the city using a clay brick (Heb. *lebenah*) to represent Jerusalem. The Hebrew word for "brick" describes both clay tablets on which people wrote private correspondence, official documents, and other data, as well as common building bricks (cf. Gen. 11:3). It is not clear exactly which type Ezekiel used. In either case, he built a model of the siege of Jerusalem with enemy siege-works, an earth ramp, camps of soldiers, and battering rams, much like a small boy uses toy soldiers and models of tanks and buildings to play war today. It is not clear either whether the whole model fit on the brick or whether the brick just represented the city of Jerusalem. I tend to think the brick represented Jerusalem and Ezekiel built other models that he placed around it. The outline of Jerusalem would have been distinctive and easily recognizable by Ezekiel's audience, and he may even have labeled the brick as Jerusalem.¹⁷

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.

God was using Ezekiel to do an object lesson to get their attention and warn that they were going to be in trouble.

[lay siege against it] Five Acts in Besieging a City (Dake)

1. Building a fort against the city (Ezekiel 4:2). These were really watchtowers, and many were built before a besieged city for the purpose of watching and harassing the inhabitants (Ezekiel 17:17; Ezekiel 21:22; Ezekiel 26:8; 2 Kings 15:1; Jeremiah 52:4).
2. Casting up a mount against the city (Ezekiel 4:2). The mount was an inclined road built up to a castle or a wall so the attackers could bring their engines of war closer, work to greater advantage, and possibly get to the top of the wall and enter the city. Every available material was used for this—earth, trees, stones, etc. Mounts are often called banks in Scripture (2 Samuel 20:15; Isaiah 37:33), and bulwarks (Deut. 20:20; 2 Chron. 26:15; Eccles. 9:14; Isaiah 26:1).
3. Setting up camp against the city (Ezekiel 4:2); that is, establishing various positions around the city.
4. Setting battering rams against the city (Ezekiel 4:2). These were engines of war with beams of wood suspended on chains and generally in moveable towers that could be placed against a wall to batter it until it weakened or until a hole was made through it (Ezekiel 21:22; Ezekiel 26:9; 2 Samuel 20:15; 2 Chron. 26:15).
5. Setting up a wall of iron or a shield of protection as close to the city as possible so that archers could be protected while shooting at the city or the people on the walls.

Clarke: Take thou unto thee an iron pan (*machabath*), a flat plate or slice, as the margin properly renders it: such as are used in some countries to bake bread on, called a

¹⁷ Dr. Constable's Notes on Ezekiel, 2010 edition

griddle or girdle, being suspended above the fire, and kept in a proper degree of heat for the purpose. A plate like this, stuck perpendicularly in the earth, would show the nature of a wall much better than any pan could do. The Chaldeans threw such a wall round Jerusalem, to prevent the besieged from receiving any succours, and from escaping from the city.

This shall be a sign to the house of Israel—This shall be an emblematical representation of what shall actually take place.

The **iron plate** or pan was a utensil that Ezekiel possessed as a priest; it was for baking grain for the cereal offerings (Lev. 2:5; 6:21; 7:9). Here its purpose was to represent a wall between Ezekiel and the city. The first three verses of the chapter dramatize to the house of Israel the inevitable and inescapable siege that would come against the holy city.¹⁸

McGee: Now Ezekiel was to take an iron pan and put it between himself and this picture of Jerusalem which he had made to show that God had put a wall between Himself and the city of Jerusalem. The destruction of the city was inevitable; it could not be stopped. What a tremendous way in which to bring God’s message to these people!

The sign of the tile portrayed the siege of Jerusalem. The second sign of the pan showed the hardships of divine judgment, that the people were to go through terrible suffering. A third sign describes additional punishments to come upon Jerusalem. It is the sign of the defiled bread:

2-3 The inevitable fall of Jerusalem was portrayed by five props: (1) a “siege wall” or fortress; (2) a “mound,” i.e., an earthen ramp used in scaling the walls; (3) “camps,” referring to military encampments; (4) “battering rams,” for battering walls, gates, etc.; and (5) an “iron plate,” which probably represented the impenetrable advancing army.¹⁹

InDepth—Ezekiel’s Obedience

Ezekiel resembles many of the other prophets of the Old Testament, for like them, he seemed strange to his neighbors and friends. It is one thing to prophesy about impending judgment and warn people to repent; it is quite another to lie on your side for 390 days to illustrate a point. But Ezekiel did not worry about how he looked to others, for he owed his obedience to God. So if God told him to do something he did it.

Some of his actions may have seemed peculiar, such as imprisoning himself in his own house. Others, like lying on his left side for 390 days and his right side for 40 days, may have appeared almost comical. Some, such as not mourning his own wife’s death, must have appeared callous, even abhorrent according to the rituals and traditions of his day. But God had a purpose in having Ezekiel perform each of these acts. A point was illustrated and a lesson was taught. Some may have laughed at the prophet, and many ignored him—to their own peril.

¹⁸ The Nelson Study Bible

¹⁹ Believer’s Study Bible

Modern believers can relate to Ezekiel’s being out of step with his contemporaries. Obedience to the will of God can be difficult in any generation. It is a struggle to live the way God wants you to live while the rest of society continues in its sinful ways. While our actions may not be as dramatic as Ezekiel’s, their consequences can be important, both as examples to others, and as indications of our obedience to God.²⁰

Ten Signs in Ezekiel		
Sign	Teaching	Passage
1. Clay Tablet	Jerusalem’s siege and fall	4:1-3
2. Posture	Duration of the Exile	4:4-8
3. Bread	Deprivations of captivity	4:9-17
4. Shaving	Destruction of the people of Jerusalem	5:1-17
5. Packing of the Prophet’s Belongings	Exile to another land	12:1-16
6. Trembling	Harshness of judgment	12:17-20
7. Sharpened Sword	Judgment imminent	21:1-32
8. Smelting Furnace	Judgment & purification	22:1-31
9. Death of Ezekiel’s Wife	Blessings forfeited	24:15-27
10. Two Sticks	Reunion of Israel & Judah	37:15-28

Ezekiel was told to “act out” the coming siege of Jerusalem (in 587; 2 Kings 24:20-25:21; Jer. 52:4-11). On a *brick* of soft clay he drew a picture of Jerusalem, built a *siege wall* (a tower), connected the two with a *ramp*, and arranged *camps* (soldiers) to besiege it. The strength of the besiegers and the impossibility of escape was represented by the *iron plate* Ezekiel set up (v. 3).²¹

ESV: The **iron griddle** (Hb. *makhabath barzel*) was part of the priestly equipment (see Lev. 2:5; 6:21; 7:9); domestic versions were probably not metal. The **sign** ensures that the siege, which could have been construed as God’s passive neglect, be understood as deliberate hostility.

Chuck Smith: So he’s going to give them now a little illustrated sermon. He takes this clay tile, clay brick, and he draws the picture of Jerusalem. And draws these armies camped against it. And he draws these battering rams knocking down the wall. And then he takes this iron plate and he puts the plate there and pushes it against between him and

²⁰ The Nelson Study Bible

²¹ The Ryrie Study Bible

the city, as the city is in siege, and of course, he is there showing how that God Himself is coming against the city. God is destined to turn it over into the hands of their enemies. Now, the false prophets were saying to the people, "Don't worry, Jerusalem is going to conquer the Babylonians. They're going to destroy them and then they're going to come and take us home." Ezekiel's saying, "Not so," and he's drawing these pictures and saying, "This is the way it's going to happen. This is the way it's going to be." Now the second illustration. And there are four ways by which he is to illustrate the truth to them. The second is a little more difficult.

Constable: Then Ezekiel was to place an iron plate between himself and his model of the city and to lay siege to Jerusalem. This was to be a sign to the people of Israel of what God would do to the real Jerusalem (cf. Deut. 28:52-57). The meaning of the iron plate or pan is also debatable, though it appears to have been a common cooking griddle (Heb. *mahabhath*). It may have signified the Babylonian army that made escape from the city impossible, God's determined hostility against Jerusalem, the barrier of sin that the Jews had raised between themselves and God, or Ezekiel's protection as he acted out his drama. I favor the view that it represented a barrier that existed between the people and God, whom Ezekiel represented, that their sin had erected and that their prayers could not penetrate (cf. Isa. 58:2; Lam. 3:44).

Evidently Ezekiel built this model scene without speaking to his audience or explaining what he was doing, and he probably did it just outside his house (cf. 3:24-25).

"The purpose of God in this prophetic act was hardly limited to letting Ezekiel and his countrymen in on the future. More important was their need to see that God was not about to let the sins of the city He had chosen go unpunished."

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.

Dake: 390 Days

Ezekiel was to lie upon his left side daily for 390 days and bear the iniquity of the house of Israel. How long during each day he did this is not stated, but no doubt at least long enough and in the same place so that the captives among whom he lived could see his daily acting. The 390 days represented 390 years, as explained in Ezekiel 4:5. This does not give prophetic scholars the authority to make every day equal to a year, or every year equal to a day in all places in prophecy where the words days and years are found. Unless we have divine authority in any one passage, then we are to take days to mean days and years to mean years. In the pantomime here God simply wanted to express, by the prophet's symbolic action, that Israel was to bear their iniquity for 390 years. He was to lie down part of a day for 390 days and then teach God's purpose to Israel.²²

²² Dake Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

Clarke: Lie thou also upon thy left side—It appears that all that is mentioned here and in the following verses was done, not in idea, but in fact. The prophet lay down on his left side upon a couch to which he was chained, verse 6, for three hundred and ninety days; and afterwards he lay in the same manner, upon his right side, for forty days. And thus was signified the state of the Jews, and the punishment that was coming upon them.

1. The prophet himself represents the Jews.
2. His lying, their state of depression.
3. His being bound, their helplessness and captivity.
4. The days signify years, a day for a year; during which they were to bear their iniquity, or the temporal punishment due to their sins.
5. The three hundred and ninety days, during which he was to lie on his left side, and bear the iniquity of the house of Israel, point out two things: the first, The duration of the siege of Jerusalem. Secondly, The duration of the captivity off the ten tribes, and that of Judah.
6. The prophet lay three hundred and ninety days upon his left side, and forty days upon his right side, in all four hundred and thirty days. Now Jerusalem was besieged the ninth year of the reign of Zedekiah, 2 Kings 25:1, 2, and was not taken till the eleventh year of the same prince, 2 Kings 25:2.

But properly speaking, the siege did not continue the whole of that time; it was interrupted; for Nebuchadnezzar was obliged to raise it, and go and meet the Egyptians, who were coming to its succor. This consumed a considerable portion of time. After he had defeated the Egyptians, he returned and recommenced the siege, and did not leave it till the city was taken. We may, therefore, conclude that the four hundred and thirty days only comprise the time in which the city was actually besieged, when the city was encompassed with walls of circumvallation, so that the besieged were reduced to a state of the utmost distress. The siege commenced the tenth day of the tenth month of the ninth year of Zedekiah; and it was taken on the ninth day of the fourth month of the eleventh year of the same king. Thus the siege had lasted, in the whole, eighteen months, or five hundred and ten days. Subtract for the time that Nebuchadnezzar was obliged to interrupt the siege, in order to go against the Egyptians, four months and twenty days, or one hundred and forty days, and there will remain four hundred and thirty days, composed of $390+40=430$.

LAN: 4-17 Ezekiel's unusual actions symbolically portrayed the fate of Jerusalem. He lay on his left side for 390 days to show that Israel would be punished for 390 years; then he lay on his right side for 40 days to show that Judah would be punished for 40 years. Ezekiel was not allowed to move, symbolizing the fact that the people of Jerusalem would be imprisoned within the walls of the city. We know that Ezekiel did not have to lie on his side all day because these verses tell of other tasks God asked him to do during this time. The small amount of food he was allowed to eat represented the normal ration provided to those living in a city under siege by enemy armies. The food that was to be cooked over human excrement was a symbol of Judah's spiritual uncleanness.

Certainly many people saw these spectacles and, in the process, heard Ezekiel's occasional speeches (Ezekiel 3:27). How many of us would be willing to so dramatically portray the sins of our nation? We need to pray for greater boldness in our witness.

BKC: 4-8. This is the most difficult sign in the book to interpret, partly because of the ambiguity of the text and partly because of a textual problem.

God told Ezekiel to lie on his left side and put the sin of the house of Israel on himself. If Ezekiel prostrated himself with his head toward Jerusalem (cf. Dan. 6:10), he was facing north when he lay on his left side (and south when he lay on his right side, Ezek. 4:6). His facing north, which represented Israel, the Northern Kingdom, was to be for 390 days. Ezekiel did not remain in this position 24 hours a day, because the very next sign (vv. 9-17) includes some other actions Ezekiel was to do in that time. He probably remained in this position for a portion of each day.

After remaining on his left side for 390 days, he was to lie on his right side, and bear the sin of the house of Judah. His facing toward the south, representing Judah, the Southern Kingdom, was to last for 40 days. To symbolize the confinement of the siege, God had Ezekiel tied up with ropes (v. 8). Apparently Ezekiel was tied up only during the time each day when he lay on his side.

The meaning of Ezekiel's actions is somewhat obscure. The Septuagint (Gr. trans. of the OT) causes even more confusion by substituting 190 days (vv. 5, 9) for 390. This emending of the text was probably done so it would make more sense. If so, the translators of the Septuagint also had difficulty interpreting the passage.

The first sign (vv. 1-3) visualized the coming siege, and the third and fourth signs (vv. 9-17 and chap. 5) focused on the results of the siege. Therefore this second sign also probably refers in some way to the siege of Jerusalem. In fact at least two factors clearly indicate that this is its point: (1) The 390 days and 40 days are called the days of your siege (4:8). (2) In the third sign Ezekiel rationed his food and water during the time he was lying on his side to depict the scarcity of food during the time of the siege (vv. 9, 16-17).

But why did the Lord choose the numbers 390 and 40? The days represent the years of their sin (v. 5), that is, each day corresponds to a year in Israel's and Judah's history. But were the years *past* or *future*? If they refer to the past, Ezekiel was showing the number of years Israel and Judah had sinned before this judgment. If they refer to the future, Ezekiel was indicating the number of years the nation would be oppressed by Gentiles after falling to Babylon.

Those who say the sign pointed to the future have tried to determine some historical point of fulfillment. Others interpret the numbers "symbolically" as indicating the end of the Babylonian Captivity, but the specific numbers and their association with both Israel and Judah make such a view unlikely.

Other scholars have said the numbers refer to 430 years of Gentile domination beginning with Jehoiachin's exile in 597 B.C., ending in 167 B.C., the year the Maccabean revolt began. This view has several problems. First, there is no indication that 597 should be used as a starting point instead of 592 (the year Ezekiel began prophesying) or instead of 586 (the year the city actually fell). Second, this view does not explain why 390 years

cf. *confer*, compare

vv. verses

v. verse

Gr. Greek

trans. translation, translator, translated

OT Old Testament

chap. chapter

were assigned to Israel. They had gone into captivity (to Assyria in 722 B.C.) 125 years before 597, when the time assigned to them actually began. Third, it is not clear that 167 B.C. actually was the year Israel was freed from the yoke of Syria. That year was only the beginning of the struggle.

Perhaps the best solution is to see the numbers as referring to the past. The 390 days corresponded to "the years of their sin" (v. 5), not the years of their chastisement. Yet no specific years can be determined with any certainty. But while the details are unclear, the message is obvious—Babylon would lay siege to Jerusalem because of her sin, and in some way the length of the siege would correspond to the years of her sin.²³

left side—referring to the *position* of the ten tribes, the *northern* kingdom, as Judah, the *southern*, answers to "the right side" (Ez 4:6). The Orientals facing the east in their mode, had the north on their *left*, and the south on their *right* (Ez 16:46). Also the right was more honorable than the left: so Judah as being the seat of the temple, was more so than Israel.²⁴

Some scholars hold that catalepsy or a prolonged illness is the motif behind this second symbol. It seems best to follow the comments made at 3:25 and find here a similar reference to Ezekiel's being bound spiritually and psychically. When he lay down in the privacy of his house, he lay on his left or right side, in keeping with the divine instructions.

From the fall of Jerusalem in 586 to the first return of the exiles in 538 is 48 years, which may in round numbers represent the duration of the **punishment of the house of Judah** (v. 6). On the 390 (or 190) days there is wide disagreement. The penalties of Israel and Judah would have been concurrent for the last forty years, but what is the *terminus a quo*? From the disruption of the monarchy in 922 B.C. to the return in 538 is 384 years, which is very near to 390 years. Perhaps this could be looked upon as a period of iniquity and punishment for the Northern Kingdom. In the books of Kings the total length of the reigns of the kings of Judah from Rehoboam to Zedekiah is given as 394 1/2 years; but this can hardly be equated with Israel's iniquity or punishment. Others find some mystical similarity to the 430 years of Egyptian bondage by adding 390 and 40! Working from 734 B.C., the ravages of Tiglath-pileser (II Kgs 15:29), to the exile yields 148 years, which would be very near to the 150 years of the LXX in the added phrase in 4:5. From the fall of Samaria in 721 to 538 is 183 years, which is close to the figure of 190 years in the LXX in 4:5, 9. Perhaps the numbers are to be taken ideally rather than literally. With the data at our disposal, it appears unwise to dogmatize as to how the 40 and 390 (or 190) years are to be reckoned.²⁵

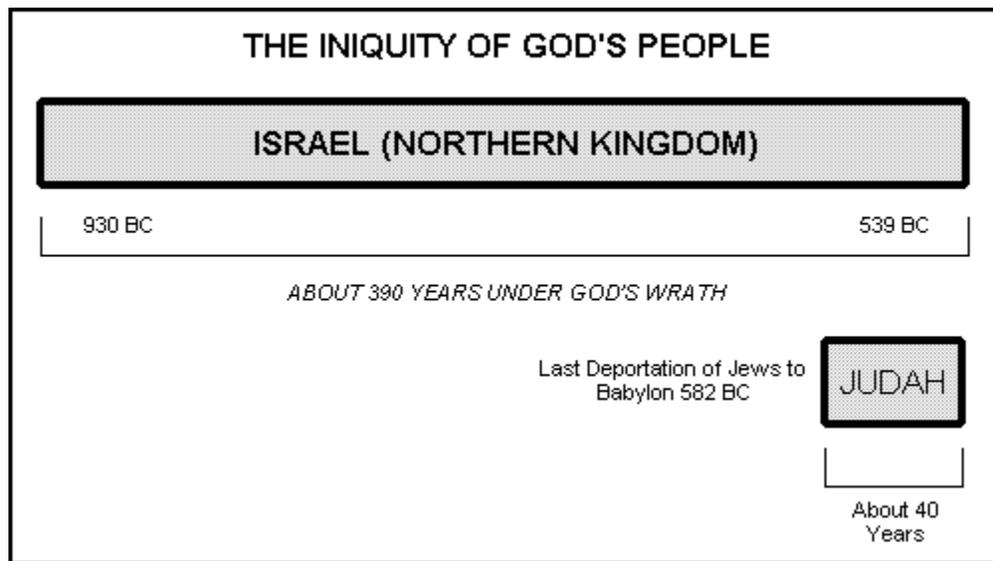
²³Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (1:1235). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

²⁴Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary. (Eze 4:4). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

²⁵Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament* (Eze 4:8). Chicago: Moody Press.

ESV:4–6 The instructions to **lie on your left side** and then again **lie down ... on your right side** prescribe Ezekiel's disposition during the enacted siege (v. 7). The practicalities of what would amount to over 14 months in this posture are not spelled out (e.g., readers are not told for how many hours each day Ezekiel would lie down this way), but the implied identification of the prophet with his people remains strong.

bear the iniquity—iniquity being regarded as a *burden*; so it means, “bear the *punishment* of their iniquity” (Nu 14:34). A type of Him who was the great *sin-bearer*, not in mimic show as Ezekiel, but in reality (Is 53:4, 6, 12).²⁶



The second action parable was performed simultaneously with the first. Ezekiel was to lie on his “left side” for 390 days. If his head was toward the east, the orienting direction of the ancients, then his back would be toward the north. During those days on his left side Ezekiel was illustrating the years of the iniquity of the “house of Israel.” Here the expression “house of Israel” is used in its narrow sense of the Northern Kingdom. After the death of Solomon in 931 B.C. the northern tribes had broken away from Judah to form their own kingdom. The Assyrian King Sargon finally destroyed that kingdom in 722 B.C. and incorporated the territory into the Assyrian empire. Each day the prophet remained positioned on his left side represented a year which Israel had been estranged from God. From its inception in 931 B.C. the Northern Kingdom stood under the condemnation of God because they abandoned the worship of God in his Temple in Jerusalem. This estrangement would last in round figures for 390 years. Subtracting 390 from 931 B.C. yields a date of 541 B.C.. Israel’s estrangement from God would end with the rise of Cyrus, the fall of Babylon in 539 B.C., the liberation of the captives, and the return of the remnant to Jerusalem (4:4f.).

²⁶Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary. (Eze 4:4). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

When he had completed his 390 days on his left side, Ezekiel was to reverse positions and lie on his right side for forty days. This would mean that his back was now to the south. Ezekiel was now illustrating the estrangement of Judah, the Southern Kingdom, from the Lord. Again each day represented one year of actual time. According to Jeremiah 52:30 the last contingent of Jews was deported to Babylon in 582 B.C. five years after the destruction of Jerusalem. For roughly the next forty years Jews, like their ancestors before them, were in a wilderness—the wilderness of exile in a foreign land. During those years they were denied access to the Promised Land (4:6).

Jeremiah had predicted that Nebuchadnezzar would rule the world for seventy years (Jer 25:11). Ezekiel was focusing on the last forty years of that period. The entire nation would be outside the Promised Land for that period. By 542 B.C. Cyrus, the anointed of God (Isa 45:1) was on the scene. Through his conquests he prepared the way for God's people to return to their homeland. The following chart illustrates how this first time prophecy in Ezekiel was fulfilled.

During the 430 days of his action parable God told Ezekiel to set his face toward the siege of Jerusalem. Apparently he was to be facing the brick which was inscribed with the diagram of Jerusalem. He was to bare his arm, a gesture of hostility. By his actions he was prophesying against the city. During this time God rendered him immobile. Ezekiel appeared as if God had placed ropes on him to restrain him. He was not able to turn from one side to the other until the 430 days of his siege were completed (4:7f.).²⁷

ESV: Punishment (Hb. *'awon*, “punishment” or “iniquity,” given as an alternative in esv footnote; cf. vv. 5, 6, 17). The word may refer to either an offense or its penalty. Ezekiel's enactment points to “punishment,” which is the most likely sense (see v. 12), although when combined with **bear**, *'awon* usually carries the nuance of “iniquity” (e.g., Lev. 10:17; Num. 18:1). The **number of the days**, stipulated in the following verses, corresponds to periods of exile. Both phrases strikingly parallel the pro Ezekiel's identification with the punishment of the people prefigures Christ's bearing the sins of his people (2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:22–24).

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.

[years of their iniquity, according to the number of the days, three hundred and ninety days] The 390 years were from the division of the kingdom under Jeroboam and Rehoboam to the 11th year of Zedekiah, when Jerusalem fell.

[the iniquity of the house of Israel] (Dake)

²⁷ Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Eze 4:4–8). Joplin, Mo.: College Press.

Forty Years—the Iniquity of Israel

The iniquity of the house of Israel must refer to all Israel and not to any one portion only, whereas the particular mention of Judah bearing iniquity 40 years (in Ezekiel 4:6) must refer to all of Israel represented by the kingdom of Judah after the 10 tribes had been destroyed. The two terms "the house of Israel" and "the house of Judah" are used interchangeably throughout of the one people. While the 2 kingdoms existed they were recognized as all of Israel, but after the captivity of the 10 tribes, Judah, including people from all the 12 tribes and Levi who became a part of Judah, were considered representative of all Israel. In prophesying to the captives of Judah, Ezekiel used the term "Israel" of these Jews 186 times; and Jeremiah, who prophesied at the same time, used it 126 times, referring to them. Jeremiah used the term "Judah" 183 times of the same Jews, but Ezekiel only used it 15 times. There were 2 houses of Israel during most of the 390 years of Ezekiel 4:5; and even after the 10 tribes were taken captive they continued to bear their iniquity to the time the other house (Judah) also bore the same iniquity at the same time. Judah is singled out as bearing a special 40 years of iniquity because of committing greater sins than the 10 tribes during this additional 40 years; for this they were also finally taken captive.

three hundred and ninety days—The three hundred ninety years of punishment appointed for Israel, and forty for Judah, cannot refer to the siege of Jerusalem. That siege is referred to in Ez 4:1–3, and in a sense restricted to the literal siege, but comprehending the *whole* train of punishment to be inflicted for their sin; therefore we read here merely of its sore pressure, not of its result. The sum of three hundred ninety and forty years is four hundred thirty, a period famous in the history of the covenant-people, being that of their sojourn in Egypt (Ex 12:40, 41; Ga 3:17). The forty alludes to the forty years in the wilderness. Elsewhere (De 28:68; Ho 9:3), God threatened to bring them back to Egypt, which must mean, not Egypt literally, but a bondage as bad as that one in Egypt. So now God will reduce them to a kind of new Egyptian bondage to the world: Israel, the greater transgressor. for a longer period than Judah (compare Ez 20:35–38). Not the whole of the four hundred thirty years of the Egypt state is appointed to Israel; but this shortened by the forty years of the wilderness sojourn, to imply, that a way is open to their return to life by their having the Egypt state merged into that of the wilderness; that is, by ceasing from idolatry and seeking in their sifting and sore troubles, through God's covenant, a restoration to righteousness and peace [FAIRBAIRN]. The three hundred ninety, in reference to the *sin* of Israel, was also literally true, being the years from the setting up of the calves by Jeroboam (1Ki 12:20–33), that is, from 975 to 583 B.C.: *about* the year of the Babylonians captivity; and perhaps the forty of Judah refers to that part of Manasseh's fifty-five year's reign in which he had not repented, and which, we are expressly told, was the cause of God's removal of Judah, notwithstanding Josiah's reformation (1Ki 21:10–16; 2Ki 23:26, 27).²⁸

²⁸Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary. (Eze 4:5). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

Then Ezekiel was to recline in public on his left side for 390 days. This was to represent the number of years that Israel would have to bear punishment for her sins. Evidently when Ezekiel lay on his left side he faced north, the Northern Kingdom. This meant that his body would have been pointing west, toward Jerusalem.

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.

[forty days: I have appointed thee each day for a year] (Dake)

Forty Years

The 40 years were to be a part of the 390 years and both periods were to end with the fall of Judah and Jerusalem. The 40 years would take us back to the 13th year of the reign of Josiah, the year that Jeremiah began making the predictions in Palestine regarding the coming judgment on Judah and Jerusalem (Jeremiah 1:1). Subtracting the 13 years from Josiah's 31-year reign would leave 18 years of his rule extending into the 40-year period. Excluding the 3-month reign each of Jehoahaz and Jehoiachin, the 40 years would be made up as in the following, ending with the destruction of the city of Jerusalem, as predicted in Ezekiel 4:1-3,7-8,16-17.

Forty years made up of:

1. Josiah's reign (Jeremiah 1:2; 2 Kings 22:1)	18
2. Jehoiakim's reign (2 Kings 23:36)	11
3. Zedekiah's reign (2 Kings 24:18)	11
	—
Total years	40

Clarke: Forty days—Reckon, says Archbishop Newcome, near fifteen years and six months in the reign of Manasseh, two years in that of Amon, three months in that of Jehoahaz, eleven years in that of Jehoiakim, three months and ten days in that of Jehoiachin, and eleven years in that of Zedekiah; and there arises a period of forty years, during which gross idolatry was practiced in the kingdom of Judah. Forty days may have been employed in spoiling and desolating the city and the temple.

each day for a year—literally, “a day for a year, a day for a year.” Twice repeated, to mark more distinctly the reference to Nu 14:34. The picturing of the future under the image of the past, wherein the meaning was far from lying on the surface, was intended to arouse to a less superficial mode of thinking, just as the partial veiling of truth in Jesus’ parables was designed to stimulate inquiry; also to remind men that God’s dealings in the

past are a key to the future, for He moves on the same everlasting *principles*, the *forms* alone being transitory.²⁹

bear their iniquity: The prophet represented Israel—the northern kingdom—and Judah—the southern kingdom—and the length of time each was going to be punished for its sin. Since Ezekiel set the deportation of Jehoiachin (597 B.C.) as his chronological reference point (see 1:2), the most straightforward interpretation of vv. 4–8 pictures the punishment of exile and Gentile rule inflicted upon the Hebrew nation over a 430-year period as extending from 597 to approximately 167 B.C. This was the time Jewish rule returned to Judah, through the Maccabean revolt.³⁰

Chuck Smith 4-6: So the Lord says, "Lie there on your left side for three hundred and ninety days in which you bear the iniquity of the house of Israel. This is how many years they were filled with iniquity against Me." So he had to lie there for three hundred and ninety days on his left side, bearing the iniquity of the house of Israel. A day for a year. Then after that, turned over--I bet it felt good--over on his right side. And then another forty days lying on his right side.

Now, I don't think that he lay there the whole while. Probably each day would go down and lie out there on his side. But I do feel that he probably got up and moved around and so forth, but he was always... whenever the people would see him, he was lying there on his left side, going out every morning and assuming the position and then just saying, "I'm bearing the iniquity of the house of Israel. This is how many years." And then forty years for the house of Judah.

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.

Dake: [thine arm shall be uncovered] The arm of Ezekiel was to be bare in his siege of the tile representing Jerusalem (Ezekiel 4:1-3,7). Bands were to be laid upon him; that is, he would be restrained by the Spirit until he carried out the siege and proclaimed it to Israel (Ezekiel 4:8).

The **arm ... uncovered**, used in connection with God's command that Ezekiel **set his face toward the siege** (see 4:3), most likely refers to the siege as a set and certain event (see Isa. 52:10, and the modern idiom of "rolling up one's sleeves"). As horrible as it was, the siege ultimately showed God's faithfulness to His covenant established in the days of Moses: that idolatry and disobedience would bring curses, which would include being conquered, captured, and removed from the land (Deut. 28:15–68).³¹

²⁹ Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary. (Eze 4:6). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

³⁰ The Nelson Study Bible

³¹ The Nelson Study Bible

ESV: As the prophet takes God's role in the street drama, the **arm bared** (cf. Isa. 52:10) suggests the more common “outstretched arm” (e.g., Ex. 6:6; Deut. 4:34; Ezek. 20:33–34) with which the Lord acts on behalf of his people, but here it is wielded *against* Jerusalem. Ezekiel's muteness (3:26) gives way to speech with the instruction to **prophesy against the city**.

Constable: After the 390 days had expired, he was to lie on his right side for an additional 40 days. This was to represent the number of additional years the Southern Kingdom of Judah would have to suffer punishment for her sins. He was to face Jerusalem with his arm bared signifying Yahweh's hostility toward His people. The prophesying that he was to do against Jerusalem (v. 7) was by means of this skit. The Septuagint has Ezekiel lying on his left side for 190 days and on his right side for 150 days, but the reason for these periods is unknown.

That these days represented years of divine punishment seems clear (v. 6), but what years are in view is a problem. Were they literal or figurative years, and were these years in the past or in the future? Unless they were literal years we have no way of knowing what they represented. If they were future years and began with the year of Jehoiachin's deportation (597 B.C.), which is the date of reference that Ezekiel used throughout his book, the total 430 years would have ended about 167 B.C. This was the year of the Maccabean rebellion when the Jews began to throw off their foreign oppressors, the Syrians, and took control of their own affairs once again.¹²⁶ But why God divided these years into two such unusual segments remains a mystery. I think the 430 days may have been the total length of the siege of Jerusalem, which God viewed as punishment for 390 years of the Northern Kingdom's sins and 40 more years of the Southern Kingdom's sins. The fact that the length of time the Israelites were in Egypt was 430 years (Exod. 12:40) may have reminded Ezekiel's audience of that former captivity. Likewise Israel's 40 years in the wilderness has a parallel in this prophecy. In this case the years of sin would have been in the past.¹²⁷ Other views are that the 430 days represented the years of the monarchy, or the years Solomon's temple stood. It still remains difficult, however, to explain exactly which 390 and 40 years God had in mind. Perhaps they were the worst years of sin. In some way the length of the siege corresponded to the past years of Israel and Judah's sin.

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.

Missler: $390 + 40 = 430$ days. Most scholars do believe that he laid there continually during those 430 days. They believe what he did was go out there at a certain point each day and lay on his side as a public statement. But that again is an inference that we have. Whether he was actually there all the time, we do not know. Some scholars assume he did this in some ceremonial sense, representing the 390 years the Northern Kingdom spent in idolatry, and the 40 years the Southern Kingdom did likewise.³²

³² Chuck Missler, Notes on Ezekiel, khouse.org

Sin, Serious—Sin cannot be confessed and forgiven until we understand its gravity. Ezekiel had to bear Israel’s sins symbolically to understand the immense importance of His task of calling them to repentance. Sin is not an idea or theory to be debated. It is an enemy to be fought.³³

Restrain you more literally reads “place ropes on you.” Ezekiel was bound while lying on either side for the entire 430 days; but the activities described in 4:9–17 show that his lying down and being tied up occurred only during parts of each day.³⁴

By lying on his *left side* (not continuously, but during the hours of the day when he was prophesying), Ezekiel illustrated the sin of the Northern Kingdom, Israel, and when lying on his *right side*, the iniquity of the Southern Kingdom, Judah. The numbers are difficult to understand (the LXX has 190 days in vv. 5 and 9 rather than 390). 390 years from the division of the kingdom (in 931 B.C.) comes to 541 B.C. (the exiles were free to return in 538). 190 years from the Assyrian captivity in 722 B.C. comes to 532 B.C. The 40 years might be reckoned from 586 B.C. (the fall of Jerusalem) to 546 B.C., when Cyrus was a threatening power to Babylon.³⁵

Constable: The Lord promised to help Ezekiel lie on his sides by restraining his movements, as though ropes bound him in his positions. Some interpreters believed that God had someone bind Ezekiel with ropes each day, but I do not think the text requires this. Again, it appears that the prophet acted out his drama for only a few hours each day, and it was during this time that God enabled him to lie quietly.

"God's judgment of sin is inevitable. He is longsuffering (4:1-8) and may wait for years, but ultimately he will dispense judgment. This judgment will include his people."³⁶

"God's servants may have to undertake tasks involving a lot of tedium, patiently carrying out responsibilities less than entirely pleasant, regularly doing things they would much rather not have to be involved in. Preparing for a Sunday school class week after week, leading a Bible study year by year, visiting shut-ins steadily as time goes by, patiently shaping the behavior of and caring for children as the years come and go, laboring to bring about social change; these sorts of things are hardly always enjoyable. Faithfulness involves sticking to tasks where the reward cannot necessarily be experienced right away. Loyal Christian servants may not see in this life the rewards of their steady labors, but we carry on because God's work is never done in vain, no matter how hard it may be (1 Cor. 15:58)."

³³ Disciple’s Study Bible

³⁴ The Nelson Study Bible

³⁵ The Ryrie Study Bible

³⁶ Cooper p.95

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.

Dake: [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] In this pantomime Ezekiel made bread of wheat, barley, beans, lentils, millet, and fitches. He lay upon his side 390 days, then 40 days, eating this bread by weight and drinking water by measure. All his working was over a fire made of dung. This would make the food unclean, the purpose being to teach Israel that they would eat defiled bread among the Gentiles (Ezekiel 4:9-13).

[lentils] Lentils—a species of pulse, something like peas in appearance. Still a common food in Egypt, they are cooked into a pottage like beans, or stewed with garlic and oil for seasoning (Genesis 25:34; 2 Samuel 17:28; 2 Samuel 23:11).

[millet] Millet—a plant resembling wheat and rye, the stalk of which grows about 3 feet tall and bears a great number of grains. It is chiefly used as animal food. The word occurs only here in Scripture.

[fitches] Fitches—a vegetable resembling common peas (Isaiah 28:25-27). The word translated "fitches" here is translated "rye" in Exodus 9:32.

Dake: [make thee bread thereof] Making bread of a mixture of all these indicated there would be a scarcity of food, and the weighing of food daily emphasized this. People had to live on what they could possibly get together from all sources during the famine. Wheat and barley were commonly used in the making of bread but not beans, lentils, millet, and fitches.

Clarke: Take thou also unto thee wheat—In times of scarcity, it is customary in all countries to mix several kinds of coarser grain with the finer, to make it last the longer. This mashlin, which the prophet is commanded to take, of wheat, barley, beans, lentiles, millet, and fitches, was intended to show how scarce the necessities of life should be during the siege.

BKC: 9-14. Ezekiel's third sign emphasized the severity of the siege of Jerusalem. God told him to take wheat and barley, beans and lentils, millet and spelt. These were common grains in Israel's diet (cf. 2 Sam. 17:27-29). But the fact that Ezekiel was told to put them in a container and make them into bread **for** himself indicates a scarcity of food. Normally each of these foods was in abundance. During the siege, however, supplies were so scarce that several foods had to be combined to provide enough for a meal.

cf. *confer*, compare

Ezekiel had to eat the mixture of foods during the 390 days he was lying on his left side. He was to weigh out 20 shekels of food to eat each day . . . at set times. This daily ration weighed about eight ounces (NIV marg.). He was also allowed to drink a sixth of a hin, two-thirds of a quart, of water.

The purpose of his eating and drinking these meager rations was to show the scarcity of food and water in Jerusalem during the siege (cf. Ezek. 4:16-17). This sign also showed the pollution and defilement the people would experience. Ezekiel was to bake his bread in the sight of the people, using human excrement for fuel. The use of dung as fuel was practiced throughout the Middle East because of the scarcity of wood. Dung was mixed with straw and allowed to dry. The dried dung burned slowly and gave off an unpleasant odor. No stigma was associated with the use of animal dung, but using human dung was considered repulsive.

Ezekiel understood the symbolism of the sign, but the action was personally distasteful to him. He could not bring himself to do it. He responded, Not so, Sovereign LORD! I have never defiled myself. Ezekiel had always kept God's dietary laws (Deut. 14). As a priest (Ezek. 1:3) he was careful to keep himself undefiled (cf. Lev. 22:8; Ezek. 44:31). Though the Law did not specifically prohibit the use of human dung for cooking, its guideline regarding the disposal of human excrement suggests that it was considered improper (cf. Deut. 23:12-14). The LORD explained the symbolism of using human dung: The people of Israel will eat defiled food among the nations where I will drive them (Ezek. 4:13). The siege (and subsequent captivity) would force the Israelites to eat defiled food and thus become ceremonially unclean.³⁷

The prophet was to make a mongrel bread from wheat, barley, beans, lentiles (a leguminous plant bearing a small reddish bean; cf. Gen 25:34), millet (*dōhan*, a *hapax legomenon*, probably an Aramaic word; an annual grass which grows and matures without rain, the seeds of which are ground to flour and mixed with other cereals to form breadstuffs for the poor), and fitches, or spelt, a kind of wild wheat (cf. II Sam 17:28). The number of ... days ... thou shalt lie upon thy side. Unless this is looked upon as an intrusion from the previous symbol, the indication is that the second and third symbols were enacted simultaneously. The prophet could not have been literally bound on his side and also have gathered grain and baked bread.³⁸

During the days of his siege Ezekiel was to observe a restricted diet. He first received instructions from the Lord regarding his diet; then the Lord explained to Ezekiel the twofold meaning of this action parable.

1. *Dietary instructions (4:9–12)*. Contrary to the dietary laws, Ezekiel was to gather various kinds of grains into one vessel and then make from that mixture his bread. The quantity as well as the quality of his food was restricted. He was to weigh out for himself only twenty shekels of food per day, about ten ounces. He was to drink only the sixth part of a hin of water per day, i.e., a little more than a pint. He was to sip this water “from time to time” (4:9–11).

marg. margin, marginal reading

³⁷Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (1:1236). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

³⁸Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament* (Eze 4:9). Chicago: Moody Press.

Ezekiel was instructed to bake his bread over stones heated by human excrement “in their sight.” This is evidence that the prophet remained in the prone position only a portion of each day. Under God’s Law, contact with human dung rendered a person unclean (cf. Deut 23:12ff.). Yet in spite of the quality of the product and the wretched circumstances of its preparation, Ezekiel was to eat it “as barley cake,” i.e., just as he might eat a regular meal (4:12).

2. *Divine explanations (4:13–17)*. God first explained why he had directed the prophet to eat food which, according to the Law of Moses, was unclean. The prophet’s actions were designed to underscore the fact that the sons of Israel would “eat their bread unclean among the nations” where God would banish them (4:13).

In the first words attributed to Ezekiel in the book, the prophet protested the use of human dung as cooking fuel. Throughout his thirty years he had always observed the dietary provisions of the Law of Moses. No unclean meat had ever entered his mouth. God heard this complaint of his prophet. He canceled the most abhorrent aspect of the initial directive. The Lord gave Ezekiel permission to substitute cow’s dung, which was used for cooking fuel in some quarters, for human dung (4:14f.).

The second aspect of the lesson from the parable of food has to do with conditions in Jerusalem just prior to the fall of that city. God declared his intention “to break the staff of bread in Jerusalem.” Because outside food supplies would be cut off during the siege, the city would be forced to ration food and water. People would eat and drink their meager provisions “with anxiety” and “in horror” because of grave concern over the food supply. Gradually the lack of basic necessities would take its toll. People would be “appalled” as they observed the effects of the famine on their neighbors. Gradually they would “waste away” from lack of proper nutrition (4:16f.).³⁹

The combination of **wheat ... emmer** (as the esv footnote explains, emmer is a type of wheat; it is inferior to ordinary wheat) is not prohibited, but it is not appealing. Desperation for food during a siege will drive one to eat even this—and worse.

ESV: 9–17 Again, the actions commanded—in this case rationing of food and water—ensure that Ezekiel’s symbolic identification with the besieged community is complete.

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.

[**weight, twenty shekels a day**] Twenty shekels weight of bread daily would be about ten ounces.

Clarke: Twenty shekels a day—The whole of the above grain, being ground, was to be formed into one mass, out of which he was to make three hundred and ninety loaves; one loaf for each day; and this loaf was to be of twenty shekels in weight. Now a shekel,

³⁹ Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Eze 4:9–17). Joplin, Mo.: College Press.

being in weight about half an ounce, this would be ten ounces of bread for each day; and with this water to the amount of one sixth part of a hin, which is about a pint and a half of our measure. All this shows that so reduced should provisions be during the siege, that they should be obliged to eat the meanest sort of aliment, and that by weight, and their water by measure; each man's allowance being scarcely a pint and a half, and ten ounces, a little more than half a pound of bread, for each day's support.

ESV: The **twenty shekels** ration of bread amounts to just 8 ounces (0.23 kg). Since Ezekiel is acting out a symbolic message, it is not necessary to suppose that he ate or drank nothing else for 24 hours every day, but in any case his hardship was evident.

Ezekiel 4:11

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

[**sixth part of an hin**] One-sixth of a hin would be about one quart.

The sixth part of a hin is equivalent to 1.4 pints (0.6 liters).

Constable 9-11: The prophet was also to make provisions so that he would have adequate food to eat and water to drink as he lay on his side for the first 390 days. The Lord prescribed just what and how much he should consume each day: one and one-third pints of water and eight ounces of bread. These were famine rations. His bread was to be a combination of six grains rather than just one, similar to how people during a siege would have to make their bread. They would mix small amounts of whatever they could find rather than using larger quantities of a single grain.

Ezekiel may have eaten at other times of the day when he was not acting out his drama, but during his dramatic presentation each day he only ate and drank as people under siege in Jerusalem would do.

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.

Missler: He was not talking about mixing the dung into the food. He was talking about using it as fuel. Ezekiel was a priest. He knew the dietary laws; but those were ceremonial issues. What he was talking about here was survival rations. Ezekiel was trying to convey the idea that they were coming up on a siege situation; they were not going to have the luxury of complying with dietary laws. They would be lucky to find anything to eat. Famine was coming.

Dake: [**with dung that cometh out of man**] That is, upon dung. The custom was to use cow dung burned to ashes without an oven. The prophet objected to human dung, so God permitted him to substitute cow dung (Ezekiel 4:12,14-15).

Clarke: Thou shalt bake it with dung—Dried ox and cow dung is a common fuel in the east; and with this, for want of wood and coals, they are obliged to prepare their food. Indeed, dried excrement of every kind is gathered. Here, the prophet is to prepare his bread with dry human excrement. And when we know that this did not come in contact with the bread, and was only used to warm the plate, (see verse 3), on which the bread was laid over the fire, it removes all the horror and much of the disgust. This was required to show the extreme degree of wretchedness to which they should be exposed; for, not being able to leave the city to collect the dried excrements of beasts, the inhabitants during the siege would be obliged, literally, to use dried human ordure for fuel. The very circumstances show that this was the plain fact of the case. However, we find that the prophet was relieved from using this kind of fuel, for cow's dung was substituted at his request. See verse 15.

LAN: 12-14 Ezekiel asked God not to make him use human excrement for fuel because it violated the laws for purity (Leviticus 21-22; Deut. 23:12-14). As a priest, Ezekiel would have been careful to keep all these laws. To use human excrement for fuel would paint a dramatic picture of ruin. If nothing was left in the city that could be burned, it would be impossible to continue to follow God's laws for sacrifices.

Polluted. As a member of a priestly family, Ezekiel had observed the dietary laws (cf. Ex 22:30; Lev 7:18, 24; 17:11-16; 19:7; 22:8; Deut 12:16; 14:21). Verse 14 is one of the few recorded prayers in the book. 15. Ezekiel was permitted to substitute **cow's dung**, which is still used as fuel by the Bedouins and fellahin of Arabia and Egypt.⁴⁰

The use of dried animal manure as a fuel is still a common practice in the Near East. It was unthinkable for Ezekiel to use human excrement for such a purpose. As a priest, he was vitally concerned about ceremonial purity, and on that basis refused to agree to such a practice (v. 14). God accommodated Ezekiel by allowing the use of animal manure (v. 15), yet He had made His point concerning the severity of the situation.⁴¹

ESV: 12–15 Ezekiel raises no objection until he is told to use **human dung** for fuel. Animal dung is a common fuel (v. 15; cf. 1 Kings 14:10), but Ezekiel, as a priest, regards food as holy (e.g., Lev. 21:6; 22:7–8) and excrement as defiling (Deut. 23:12–14).

Chuck Smith: Now this is to show the siege that is going to happen to Jerusalem, how that the people who were in Jerusalem are going to be suffering from famine. There is going to be a water shortage. They'll be measuring out the water. There is going to be a shortage of grains, so that they'll be mixing their grains together for their bread, gathering whatever they can to make the bread. And there is going to be a shortage of food and the people are going to be starving to death, and this is to be a picture to these people in Babylon. "Look, Jerusalem is not going to be victorious. They're going to be destroyed. The people are going to be starving to death there within the city."

⁴⁰ Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament* (Eze 4:14). Chicago: Moody Press.

⁴¹ Believer's Study Bible

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.

They insisted on taking on heathen worship, heathen idols, so God says, “Great, I am going to put you at the level of the heathen.”

Dake: [**Even thus shall the children of Israel eat their defiled bread among the Gentiles, whither I will drive them**] This was the lesson taught by the eating of the kind of bread described and cooked with dung. The Jews were to eat defiled bread among the Gentiles where they would be driven by God.

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.

[abominable flesh] - meat sacrificed to idols. All the things he mentioned were in the principle dietary laws from Leviticus and Deuteronomy. (Cf. Peter and the vision of clean vs. unclean animals.)

Clarke: **My soul hath not been polluted**—There is a remarkable similarity between this expostulation of the prophet and that of St. Peter, Acts 10:14.

McGee: However, this was to be a sign from the Lord of the famine the people would experience at the time of the destruction of the city of Jerusalem. Despite the continued promises of the false prophets, the city and the people were going to be lost. These various signs described the horrors that were to come.

Revelation, Actions—In Exile, Ezekiel needed dramatic ways to catch people’s attention. God gave him symbolic actions which preached God’s message of Jerusalem’s siege and destruction, the Exile as a time of atonement, and the Exile as punishment. The extreme action of ritual defilement was too much for the priest-prophet Ezekiel, so he complained to God. This shows the freedom to respond that God gave His inspired messengers.⁴²

The bread is called **defiled** (v. 13) in light of what is said in v. 12. In order to portray the fate of the unfaithful nation, God wanted Ezekiel to temporarily eat food made unclean by being cooked over a fire fueled by **human waste** (Deut. 23:12–14). God at first commanded Ezekiel to use human excrement because it would most accurately and forcefully symbolize the horror of the coming siege of the city. But **cow dung**, a common

⁴² Disciple’s Study Bible

fuel then as now, was allowed as a substitute in light of Ezekiel's prayerful insistence and practical faithfulness to the ceremonial law (Deut. 12:15–19; 14:3–21).⁴³

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.

God gave him one concession, that instead of human dung, he could use cow dung, which was a little less offensive.

BKC: 15-17. God graciously granted Ezekiel's request. I will let you bake your bread over cow manure instead of human excrement. Less of a stigma was associated with the use of cow dung, so God let Ezekiel use it.

The scarcity of food and water during Babylon's siege of Jerusalem (cf. Lam. 1:11; 2:11-12, 19; 4:4-5, 9), and the people's accompanying anxiety (cf. Ezek. 12:19) and emaciation (cf. Lam. 4:8), was all because of their sin (cf. Lam. 4:13; 5:16).

(4) The sign of the shaved head and divided hair (chap. 5). This fourth sign visualized Jerusalem's fate. The sign was given in verses 1-4 and explained in verses 5-17. After Ezekiel represented the *fact* of the siege (first sign), the *length* of the siege (second sign), and its *severity* (third sign), he demonstrated the *results* of the siege (fourth sign). To accomplish this sign Ezekiel journeyed from the confines of his house—certainly an action which in itself caught the people's attention. He went "inside the city" (v. 2a) and "all around the city" (v. 2b).⁴⁴

Lord, I've been kosher all my life, and now you're telling me to be non-kosher. Lord, I can't do that.

Constable: 12-15: Ezekiel was to bake his food over a fire made with human excrement, as the Jews under siege in Jerusalem would have to do. The uncleanness of their food did not represent the type of food they would have to eat but the fact that they would have to eat their food among defiled people (in captivity, v. 13). The prophet complained that he had never eaten unclean food (cf. 44:31; Lev. 22:8; Deut. 12:15-19; 14:21; 23:9-14), so the Lord graciously allowed him to prepare his food over a fire made with cow's dung rather than human feces.

Ezekiel could not have been lying on his side continuously all day because he prepared meals during some of this time. In parts of the Middle East today, some people still use dried animal dung as fuel due to the scarcity of wood.¹³¹ God acceded to Ezekiel's request to substitute animal dung for human feces because the prophet wished to preserve his own purity and because the use of human waste, though more realistic, was not essential to the lesson Ezekiel was to teach the people (cf. Acts 10:14-15).

⁴³ The Nelson Study Bible
cf. *confer*, compare
chap. chapter
v. verse

⁴⁴Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (1:1236). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

". . . God was not so much trying to get Ezekiel to violate his own priestly responsibilities as to be reminded of how many compromises of what is usual and normal would have to be made by those cooped up in Jerusalem under overwhelming enemy pressure."

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:

Dake: [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] The prediction here was that God would cut off the supply of food in Jerusalem during the siege, and all the Jews in the city would eat bread by weight and drink water by measure and with astonishment, until they were consumed by their sins (Ezekiel 4:16-17). During the siege the famine was so severe that some even killed and cooked their children to keep alive.

Clarke: I will break the staff of bread—They shall be besieged till all the bread is consumed, till the famine becomes absolute; see 2 Kings 25:3: "And on the ninth of the fourth month, the famine prevailed in the city; and THERE WAS NO BREAD for the people of the land." All this was accurately foretold, and as accurately fulfilled.

Abp. Newcome on verse 6 observes: "This number of years will take us back, with sufficient exactness, from the year in which Jerusalem was sacked by Nebuchadnezzar to the first year of Jeroboam's reign, when national idolatry began in Israel. The period of days seems to predict the duration of the siege by the Babylonians, verse 9, deducting from the year five months and twenty-nine days, mentioned 2 Kings 25:1-4, the time during which the Chaldeans were on their expedition against the Egyptians; see Jeremiah 37:6." This amounts nearly to the same as that mentioned above.

ESV: Underlying the phrase **supply of bread** is the distinctive Hebrew "staff of bread" (*matteh-lekhem*; see esv footnote), which probably refers to a method of storage. To **break** the staff (see [5:16](#); [14:13](#); also [Lev. 26:26](#); [Ps. 105:16](#)) is synonymous with famine.

Ezekiel 4:17

That they may want bread and water, and be astonished one with another, and consume away for their iniquity.

So Ezekiel communicated through these object lessons, trying to get across to them that they should expect to be in siege conditions.

All these conditions were to symbolize how people back in Jerusalem were going to have to eat to live during the siege. They would have to eat sparingly because the famine caused by the siege would be severe.

The terrible conditions of the siege of Jerusalem would fulfill Ezekiel's symbolic acts (vv. 9–12). Both **water** and **bread** would be rationed. **Anxiety** and **dread** (see 12:19) would be rampant. The Hebrew term for *dread* could also be rendered “horror” or “shuddering.” All this would occur because of Judah's **iniquity**. The people had broken their covenant with God, and He had no choice but to bring upon them the promised consequences of their disobedience (see Lev. 26:14–29; Deut. 28:47–53; 2 Kin. 25:1–3).⁴⁵

CHART: EZEKIEL'S ACTS OF OBEDIENCE

Ezek 2:1	Stood and received God's message
Ezek 3:24-27	Shut himself inside his house
Ezek 3:27	Faithfully proclaimed God's message
Ezek 4:1-3	Drew the city of Jerusalem on a clay tablet
Ezek 4:4-5	Lay on his left side for 390 days
Ezek 4:6	Lay on his right side for 40 days
Ezek 4:9-17	Followed specific cooking instructions
Ezek 5:1-4	Shave his head and beard
Ezek 12:3-7	Left home to demonstrate exile
Ezek 13:1-23	Spoke against false prophets
Ezek 19:1-14	Sang a lament concerning the leaders
Ezek 21:2	Prophesied against Israel and the temple
Ezek 21:19-23	Marked out two roads for Babylon's king
Ezek 24:16-17	Did not mourn his wife's death

⁴⁵ The Nelson Study Bible

Chuck Missler Notes:

Eekiel's "430 Years"

Ezekiel 4:1-8: 430 years of judgment predicted.

430 - 70 years captivity = 360 unaccounted for?

Leviticus 26:18, 21, 24, 28: Multiply by seven.

$360 \times 7 = 2520$ years

360 day years:

Genesis 7:24, 8:3,4, etc.;

Revelation: 42 months; 3 1/2 years; 1260 days; being equivalent, etc.

$2520 \text{ years} \div 360 = 907,200$ days.

$2483 \text{ years} \div 365 = 906,295$ days, + ?

What about leap years?

The Julian year is 11 minutes 10.46 seconds longer than the mean solar year. Therefore, the Julian calendar contains 3 leap years too many every 4 centuries. An error of 11 days occurred as of 1752 A.D. and was corrected by the Gregorian reform which declared September 3 to be September 14, 1752, and reckoning

1700, 1800, and 1900 as common years and 2000 as a leap year.

Dividing 2483 by 4 = 621, with 18 too many (3 excess every 4 centuries); 11 have already been corrected for by the Gregorian reform: $18 - 11 = 7$; $621 - 7 = 614$.

$2483 \text{ years} \div 365 = 906,295$ days

plus, for leap years 614 days

9 months 270 days

21 days 21 days

$2520 \text{ years} \div 360 = 907,200$ days

Don't confuse the "Servitude of the Nation" with the "Desolations of Jerusalem." The "Desolations of Jerusalem" was punishment for not yielding to the "servitude": Jeremiah 27:6, 8, 11; 38:17-21. Cf. Jeremiah 29:10; Daniel 9:2. Both the "Servitude of the Nation" and the "Desolations of Jerusalem" were predicted to last 70 years, but these were 360-day years:

$70 \text{ years} \div 360 = 25,200$ days = 69 years $\div 365$ less 2 days.

Servitude of the Nation

606 B.C. + 69 years = 537 B.C.

If July 23, 537 B.C. was the release from the *Servitude of the Nation*, then

-537y 7m 23d

(no "year 0"): 1

2483y 9m 21d

1948 5 14

which is **May 14, 1948**. It was on this date that David Ben Gurion declared on international radio, and using Ezekiel as his authority, the re-establishment of **Israel** as the new Jewish homeland

Desolations of Jerusalem

587 B.C. + 69 years = 518 B.C.

If August 16, 518 B.C. was the completion of the *Desolations of Jerusalem*, then

-518y 8m 16d

(no "year 0" 1 B.C. to 1 A.D.) 1

2483y 9m 21d

1967 6 7

which is **June 7, 1967**. As a result of the "Six Day War," Israel regained control of the Old City of Jerusalem, for the first time since the time of Christ (Cf. Luke 21:24).

A stretch, but interesting.

Dates

Ezekiel's oracles are more frequently dated than those of other OT prophets. The first date of the book takes the reader to the summer of 593 b.c., five years after the first group of exiles was deported to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar. The latest-dated oracle comes 22 years after that summer, in April of 571 b.c. The book is arranged chronologically in three parts: chapters 1–24 and 33–48 form one sequence, while the foreign-nation oracles of chapters 25–32 have their own order (see Outline). Caution must be exercised in attempting to align Ezekiel's dates with those of the modern calendar, but the rough equivalents are as shown in the chart, Dates in Ezekiel.

Dates in Ezekiel

Reference	Year/month/day following exile of Jehoiachin	Modern equivalent*/year b.c.	Situation
<u>1:2</u>	5th year / 4th month / 5th day	July 593	inaugural vision
<u>8:1</u>	6th year / 6th month / 5th day	September 592	first temple vision
<u>20:1</u>	7th year / 5th month / 10th day	August 591	elders come to inquire
<u>24:1</u>	9th year / 10th month / 10th day**	January 588 or 587	siege of Jerusalem begins
<u>26:1</u>	11th year / month (?) / 1st day	c. 587–586	oracle against Tyre, before Babylon besieged it
<u>29:1</u>	10th year / 10th month / 12th day	January 587	oracle against Egypt
<u>29:17</u>	27th year / 1st month / 1st day	April 571	Egypt assigned to Babylon; after end of Babylon's siege of Tyre
<u>30:20</u>	11th year / 1st month / 7th day	April 587	oracle against Egypt
<u>31:1</u>	11th year / 3rd month / 1st day	June 587	oracle against Egypt
<u>32:1</u>	12th year / 12th month / 1st day	March 585	oracle against Egypt
<u>32:17</u>	12th year / 12th month / 15th day	April 585	oracle against Egypt
<u>33:21</u>	12th year / 10th month / 5th day	January 585	fugitive arrives in Babylon
<u>40:1</u>	25th year / 1st month (?) / 10th day (?)	April 573	second temple vision

*For simplicity, here and in the notes that follow, only the second month of the modern equivalent is given (cf. Months in the Hebrew Calendar) **Unique dating formula in Hebrew; see notes ***earliest recorded oracle ****latest recorded oracle

