

**Ezek. 4:1** Thou also, son of man, take thee a tile, and lay it before thee, and pourtray upon it the city, *even* Jerusalem:

**Ezek. 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.

Ezekiel is instructed to take a *tile*, a white clay brick, and draw a representation of the city of Jerusalem on it. Then he is to portray a siege of the city by building a battering tower (fort), building a military mound (mount), make a representation of an encampment of soldiers around it equipped with battering rams.

**Ezek. 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.

The CJB gives a clear picture of this verse.

Then take an iron griddle and put it in place as a wall of iron between yourself and the city, and fix your gaze on it — the city is under siege, and you are the one besieging it. This will be a sign for the house of Isra'el.

The Lord is giving an object lesson through Ezekiel.

**Ezek. 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.

**Ezek. 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.

Ezekiel is now instructed to lie on his left side for 390 days in a picture of bearing the punishment for the sin of the house of Israel. Each day represents a year of punishment.

**Ezek. 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.

Then Ezekiel is to turn on his right side and lay for 40 days in a picture of bearing the punishment for the sin of the house of Judah.

I read several different opinions as to what these years specifically referred, and I'm not going to pretend to know. I do know that they represent time in which the nation has rejected God's authority, and God has decided that judgment is to be declared. I also know that God's judgment is righteous and the time of judgment is deserved.

It would also seem that if he is being instructed to remain prone during the time he is pictured as bearing their punishment, he is representing a helpless position, a confining position.

**Ezek. 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.

Again, I like the language of the CJB.

You are to fix your gaze on the siege of Yerushalayim, and, with your arm bared, prophesy against it.

An uncovered arm is not hindered with clothing and is better prepared for battle. It would seem that Ezekiel is representing the enemy under the LORD's authority ready to inflict judgment. The message of prophecy provides an opportunity for the people to repent.

**Ezek. 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.**

Ezekiel is told that God will ensure that he completes the required time on each side. I can't help but think of Ezekiel 3:25. I can't help but think that the "they" in that verse should read "I" as in this verse.

**Ezek. 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.**

**Ezek. 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.**

Next, the LORD gives him instructions regarding the food he is to eat, how to prepare it, and how much he can consume at one time. I would assume from the reference to his wife later on in this book, that she would have assisted him in making these preparations.

"twenty shekels" = a little more than ten ounces

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

The LORD is very precise regarding all the details. He now instructs Ezekiel as to the amount of water he is allowed to drink.

"the sixth part of an hin" = about a pint and a half per JFB

The fact that Ezekiel was given specific limited amounts of food and water to consume are descriptive of how a siege depletes the food and water supply. Because he is also representing the judgment to follow, it would indicate that they would endure that time having to carefully manage their supplies as well.

**Ezek. 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.**

**Ezek. 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.**

Several times I have run across the note that barley was the grain of choice for the poor. To use man's dung as fuel was not permitted under the law. The LORD seems to be saying, "Since you have rejected me, why bother keeping my laws." After all, He is going to cause them to be taken into captivity by the Gentiles, a culture that cared nothing for the laws of God.

**Ezek. 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.**

**Ezek. 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.**

This is more than Ezekiel can bear. He is a priest and has been careful not to defile himself; he has not ingested any unclean food in his lifetime. Ezekiel is careful to acknowledge his acceptance of God's sovereignty and authority over him, but he is asking God to hear his heart's desire to remain undefiled. God doesn't hesitate; He tells Ezekiel that he may use cow's dung to make his bread, which was a common fuel if there was no wood available.

What an amazing God! Always sensitive to the heart of His servants and ready to respond to their desire while remaining true to His purposes. This is also one of the examples in scripture that depicts the importance of communicating with God and presenting our requests before Him with a humble heart. If He chooses to reject our request, we can be sure that it is for the good and necessary to His purposes.

**Ezek. 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:**

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

At this point the LORD makes a clear statement of the scarcity of food and water that will be part of their judgment. He is going to allow them to experience real want, to know what it is like to lose His blessing. The lack of food and water will be visible in the appearance of the people. They will become emaciated and appear to be shrinking before each other's eyes.