
EZEKIEL 4: 1 You also, son of man, take a tile, and lay it before yourself, and portray on it a city, even Jerusalem:

Ezekiel delineates Jerusalem, and lays siege to it, as a type of the manner in which the Chaldean army should surround that city, Eze 4:1-3. The prophet commanded to lie on his left side three hundred and ninety days, and on his right side forty days, with the signification, Eze 4:4-8. The scanty and coarse provision allowed the prophet during his symbolical siege, consisting chiefly of the worst kinds of grain, and likewise ill-prepared, as he had only cow's dung for fuel, tended all to denote the scarcity of provision, fuel, and every necessary of life, which the Jews should experience during the siege of Jerusalem, Eze 4:9-17.

Verse 1

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 portray 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: - *Sint vero lateres longitudine pedum duorum, latitudine unius, altitudine quatuor unciarum.* "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 portrayed. 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 mound.
 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.
-

EZEKIEL 4: 2 and lay siege against it, and build forts against it, and cast up a mound against it; set camps also against it, and plant battering rams against it all around.

Verse 2

Battering rams - כַּרִּים 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.

EZEKIEL 4: 3 Take for yourself an iron pan, and set it for a wall of iron between you and the city: and set your face toward it, and it shall be besieged, and you shall lay siege against it. This shall be a sign to the house of Israel.

Verse 3

Take thou unto thee an iron pan - מַחְבַּת 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 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.

EZEKIEL 4: 4 Moreover lie on your left side, and lay the iniquity of the house of Israel on it; according to the number of the days that you shall lie on it, you shall bear their iniquity.

Verse 4

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, Eze 4:6, 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, 2Kgs 25:1, 2Kgs 25:2, and was not taken till the eleventh year of the same prince, 2Kgs 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 $390+40=430$. See Calmet on this place. See also at the end of this chapter, Eze 4:16 (note).

EZEKIEL 4: 5 For I have appointed the years of their iniquity to be to you a number of days, even three hundred ninety days: so you shall bear the iniquity of the house of Israel.

EZEKIEL 4: 6 Again, when you have accomplished these, you shall lie on your right side, and shall bear the iniquity of the house of Judah: forty days, each day for a year, have I appointed it to you.

Verse 6

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.

EZEKIEL 4: 7 You shall set your face toward the siege of Jerusalem, with your arm uncovered; and you shall prophesy against it.

EZEKIEL 4: 8 Behold, I lay bands on you, and you shall not turn you from one side to the other, until you have accomplished the days of your siege.

EZEKIEL 4: 9 Take for yourself also wheat, and barley, and beans, and lentils, and millet, and spelt, and put them in one vessel, and make bread of it; according to the number of the days that you shall lie on your side, even three hundred ninety days, you shall eat of it.

Verse 9

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 necessaries of life should be during the siege.

EZEKIEL 4: 10 Your food which you shall eat shall be by weight, twenty shekels a day: from time to time you shall eat it.

Verse 10

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, 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.

EZEKIEL 4: 11 You shall drink water by measure, the sixth part of a hin: from time to time you shall drink.

EZEKIEL 4: 12 You shall eat it as barley cakes, and you shall bake it in their sight with dung that comes out of man.

Verse 12

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 Eze 4:3), 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 Eze 4:15.

EZEKIEL 4: 13 The LORD said, Even thus shall the children of Israel eat their bread unclean, among the nations where I will drive them.

EZEKIEL 4: 14 Then I said, Ah Lord GOD! behold, my soul has not been polluted; for from my youth up even until now have I not eaten of that which dies of itself, or is torn of animals; neither came there abominable flesh into my mouth.

Verse 14

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

EZEKIEL 4: 15 Then he said to me, Behold, I have given you cow's dung for man's dung, and you shall prepare your bread on it.

EZEKIEL 4: 16 Moreover he said to me, Son of man, behold, I will break the staff of bread in Jerusalem: and they shall eat bread by weight, and with fearfulness; and they shall drink water by measure, and in dismay:

Verse 16

I will break the staff of bread - They shall be besieged till all the bread is consumed, till the famine becomes absolute; see 2Kgs 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 2Kgs 25:6 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, 2Kgs 25:9, deducting from the year five months and twenty-nine days, mentioned 2Kgs 25:1-4, the time during which the Chaldeans were on their expedition against the Egyptians; see Jer 37:6." This amounts nearly to the same as that mentioned above.

EZEKIEL 4: 17 that they may want bread and water, and be dismayed one with another, and pine away in their iniquity.
