

# Ezekiel 34:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Seemeth it a small thing unto you to have eaten up the good pasture, but ye must tread down with your feet the residue of your pastures? and to have drunk of the deep waters, but ye must foul the residue with your feet?

## Analysis

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This passage employs the shepherd metaphor to contrast failed human leaders with God as true Shepherd of Israel. Ancient Near Eastern kings commonly used shepherd imagery for their rule; Ezekiel exposes how Israel's leaders failed this calling by exploiting rather than caring for God's flock. From a Reformed perspective, this anticipates Christ as the Good Shepherd (John 10) who lays down His life for the sheep, and calls undershepherds (pastors/elders) to feed and protect God's flock (1 Peter 5:1-4). True shepherds serve the sheep's welfare, not their own interests, demonstrating Christlike servant leadership.

## Historical Context

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This passage was delivered during the Babylonian exile (c. 586-571 BCE) after Jerusalem's destruction. The exiled community grappled with theological and practical questions: Why had judgment come? Would restoration occur? How should they live in exile? The historical context of ancient Near Eastern covenant patterns, conquest and exile practices, and prophetic literature provides essential background. Archaeological discoveries from this period illuminate the exile's realities and the return's historical fulfillment. Yet Ezekiel's prophecies extend beyond immediate historical context to find fuller realization in Christ and the church, with ultimate consummation in the new creation.

## Related Passages

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**James 2:17** — Faith and works

**Hebrews 11:1** — Definition of faith

**John 15:13** — Greatest form of love

**1 John 4:8** — God is love

## Study Questions

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1. How does this verse deepen your understanding of God's character, purposes, or ways of working in history?
2. What specific application does this passage call you to make in your current circumstances or spiritual life?
3. How does this Old Testament passage illuminate New Testament teaching about Christ, salvation, or the church?

## Interlinear Text

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הַמָּעֵט	מִתְעִיכָּם	הַטּוֹב
Seemeth it a small thing	of your pastures	the good
H4592	H4829	H2896
תְּרַמֵּס 1	מִתְעִיכָּם	תְּרַמֵּס 1
unto you to have eaten up	the residue	of your pastures but ye must tread down
H7462	H3499	H4829 H7429
בְּרַגְלִיכָּם	מִים	בְּרַגְלִיכָּם
with your feet	and to have drunk	the residue
H7272	H4325	H853 H3498
תְּרַפְּשׁוּן	בְּרַגְלִיכָּם	
with your feet	but ye must foul	
H7515		

## Additional Cross-References

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**Matthew 23:13** (Parallel theme): But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.

**Luke 11:52** (Parallel theme): Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered.

**Isaiah 7:13** (Parallel theme): And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David; Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also?

**Numbers 16:13** (Parallel theme): Is it a small thing that thou hast brought us up out of a land that floweth with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, except thou make thyself altogether a prince over us?

**Numbers 16:9** (Parallel theme): Seemeth it but a small thing unto you, that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to himself to do the service of the tabernacle of the LORD, and to stand before the congregation to minister unto them?

**2 Samuel 7:19** (Parallel theme): And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord GOD; but thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come. And is this the manner of man, O Lord GOD?

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