

Ezekiel 4:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And thy meat which thou shalt eat shall be by weight, twenty shekels a day: from time to time shalt thou eat it.

Analysis

And thy meat which thou shalt eat shall be by weight, twenty shekels a day: from time to time shalt thou eat it. The rationing becomes precise—twenty shekels weight (approximately 8 ounces or 230 grams) of the mixed grain bread daily, eaten at specific intervals (me'et le-et, מְעֵת לְעֵת, "from time to time"). This meager portion, about one-third of normal daily intake, ensures survival but creates constant hunger. The weighing (mishqal, מִשְׁקָל) emphasizes scarcity—every morsel must be carefully measured and conserved.

Eating "from time to time" suggests scheduled, limited meals rather than eating freely when hungry. This regulated scarcity mimics siege conditions where food reserves diminish daily, requiring strict rationing to extend supplies. The specificity of "twenty shekels" demonstrates God's sovereign control even over judgment's details—nothing is random or excessive; everything is precisely measured according to divine justice.

Spiritually, this rationing illustrates the soul-starvation that results from rejecting God's word. Amos prophesied: "Behold, the days are coming...when I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread...but of hearing the words of the LORD" (Amos 8:11). Physical hunger during siege symbolizes deeper spiritual famine—when people reject God's abundant provision, He gives them the scarcity they've chosen. Only in Christ do we find the abundant life and spiritual food that truly satisfies (John 10:10).

Historical Context

Twenty shekels (approximately 8 ounces) of bread daily was barely subsistence level. Normal daily food consumption in ancient Israel was approximately 2-3 pounds of bread equivalent plus other foods. Ezekiel's ration represented roughly one-quarter of normal intake, enough to prevent starvation but causing chronic hunger and malnutrition.

During the actual siege of Jerusalem, rations became far worse. Jeremiah records that "the famine was severe in the city, and there was no bread for the people of the land" (Jeremiah 52:6). Archaeological evidence from destroyed houses in Jerusalem shows grinding stones still in place, suggesting people were grinding anything edible trying to make bread. Human remains from this period show signs of severe malnutrition and disease.

The measured, weighed rations in Ezekiel's sign-act would signal to the exiles that Jerusalem faced systematic, prolonged deprivation, not brief hardship. The specific measurement also prevented Ezekiel from cheating or supplementing—he must live exactly as prescribed, fully embodying the message. His hunger pangs became tangible proclamation of Jerusalem's coming suffering.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does the precision of God's measured judgment reveal His perfect justice?
2. What does chronic hunger during judgment teach about the emptiness of life apart from God's provision?
3. In what ways do we experience spiritual famine when we neglect God's word as our primary sustenance?

Interlinear Text

שְׁלֵשִׁים	שְׁלֵשִׁים	וּמְאַכְלָבָן	וְתִאכְלֵפָה	אָשָׁר	רְאַת	בְּמִשְׁקָה	וְלֹא	תִאכְלֵפָה	שְׁלֵשִׁים	שְׁלֵשִׁים	יְמִינָה
And thy meat	H834	shalt thou eat		shall be by weight					twenty		shekels
H3978		H398		H4946		H6242			H6242		H8255

וְתִאכְלֵפָה	עַתָּה	עַתָּה	עַתָּה	לַיְלָה	וְתִאכְלֵפָה	עַתָּה	עַתָּה	עַתָּה	לַיְלָה	וְתִאכְלֵפָה	עַתָּה
a day	from time	H5704	from time		shalt thou eat						
H3117		H6256		H6256		H398					

Additional Cross-References

Leviticus 26:26 (Parallel theme): And when I have broken the staff of your bread, ten women shall bake your bread in one oven, and they shall deliver you your bread again by weight: and ye shall eat, and not be satisfied.

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org