

# Ezekiel 4:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the LORD said, Even thus shall the children of Israel eat their defiled bread among the Gentiles, whither I will drive them.

## Analysis

**And the LORD said, Even thus shall the children of Israel eat their defiled bread among the Gentiles, whither I will drive them.** God explains the sign-act's meaning—Israel's exile will force them to eat ceremonially defiled food among pagan nations. "Defiled bread" (lachmam tame, לחמם טמא) represents food prepared without observing Levitical purity laws or contaminated by pagan association. "Among the Gentiles" (ba-goyim, בגוים) emphasizes the humiliation of dwelling in unclean lands unable to maintain covenant distinctiveness.

The phrase "whither I will drive them" (asher adichim sham, אשר אֲדִיחֵם שָׁם) emphasizes divine agency—this isn't Babylonian conquest but God's active judgment. The verb nadach (נָדַח, "drive" or "scatter") appears throughout prophetic literature describing exile as covenant curse (Deuteronomy 28:64; Jeremiah 8:3). God Himself scatters His unfaithful people, reversing the Exodus redemption where He gathered them from Egypt.

For a community whose identity centered on dietary laws, Sabbath observance, and temple worship, this prophecy threatened total assimilation and loss of distinctiveness. How could they remain God's people while eating defiled food in unclean lands? This crisis would eventually produce post-exilic Judaism's intensified focus on Torah observance and synagogue worship—adaptations enabling Jewish identity apart from temple and land. Ultimately, Christ fulfilled all

purity laws (Matthew 15:11; Mark 7:18-19), making cleanness a matter of heart, not diet.

## Historical Context

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Jewish dietary laws (kashrut) prescribed specific foods as clean or unclean and detailed preparation methods (Leviticus 11; Deuteronomy 14). These laws distinguished Israel from surrounding nations and symbolized covenant holiness. Maintaining these distinctions in exile proved extremely difficult—Babylonian food markets didn't cater to Jewish scruples, and exiles often lacked resources to be selective.

Daniel and his companions faced this exact challenge (Daniel 1:8-16), refusing the king's food and requesting vegetables and water to avoid defilement. Their faithfulness demonstrated that maintaining covenant distinctiveness in exile, though difficult, remained possible. Yet most exiles lacked Daniel's resources and determination, gradually compromising dietary practices under pressure of survival and assimilation.

The 'land theology' of ancient Israel taught that God's presence dwelt specially in the promised land, making foreign territories intrinsically unclean (Hosea 9:3-4; Amos 7:17). Exile thus meant not only political subjugation but spiritual contamination and distance from God's presence. This crisis forced theological development—if God's presence wasn't limited to Jerusalem and the temple, where could He be found? Ezekiel's visions of God's glory appearing in Babylon (chapters 1, 3, 10-11) began answering this question.

## Related Passages

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**Ephesians 2:8** — Salvation by grace through faith

**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

**Genesis 1:1** — Creation of heavens and earth

**Colossians 1:16** — All things created through Christ

## Study Questions

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1. How does forced defilement in exile illustrate the comprehensive consequences of covenant unfaithfulness?
2. What does Israel's struggle to maintain distinctiveness in exile teach about Christian witness in pagan culture?
3. How does Christ's fulfillment of purity laws free believers from ritual defilement while calling us to ethical holiness?

## Interlinear Text

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וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה כֹּה יֵאָכֵל וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל  
**said** **And the LORD** **eat** **Even thus shall the children** **of Israel**  
H559 H3068 H3602 H398 H1121 H3478

אֶת לֶחֶם אֲרָמֵיָם בְּגוֹיֵם אֲשֶׁר אֲדִיחַ  
**bread** **their defiled** **among the Gentiles** **whither I will drive**  
H853 H3899 H2931 H1471 H834 H5080

שָׁם:  
H8033

## Additional Cross-References

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**Daniel 1:8** (Parallel theme): But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.