

Ezekiel 4:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

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. Ezekiel's anguished response reveals deep reverence for the Mosaic law's purity regulations. God had commanded him to cook his bread over human excrement as a symbolic act (v. 12), representing the unclean conditions of Israel's coming exile. Ezekiel's protest shows his lifelong obedience to Levitical dietary laws (Leviticus 11:39-40; 17:15).

"Ah Lord GOD" (ahabah Adonai YHWH, אהָבָה אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה) expresses respectful anguish—not rebellion but heartfelt plea. "My soul hath not been polluted" (lo nitma'ah, לא נִטְמָא) emphasizes ceremonial purity maintained from youth. "That which dieth of itself" (nebelah, נְבֵלָה) and "torn in pieces" (terefah, טְרֵפָה) refer to animals not properly slaughtered, forbidden to Israelites (though allowed to foreigners, Deuteronomy 14:21).

God's gracious response (v. 15) permits cow dung instead, showing divine compassion without compromising the prophetic message. This exchange reveals important truths:

1. God's holiness demands obedience but allows appeal

2. symbolic actions need not violate God's law
 3. ceremonial purity, while important under the Old Covenant, pointed to heart purity fulfilled in Christ, who declared all foods clean (Mark 7:18-19) and cleanses us from all defilement (Titus 2:14
- Hebrews 9:13-14).

Historical Context

Ezekiel prophesied during Israel's Babylonian captivity (593-571 BC), having been deported in 597 BC with King Jehoiachin and 10,000 other leaders (2 Kings 24:12-16). Chapter 4 contains symbolic acts performed during the siege of Jerusalem (588-586 BC), which Ezekiel witnessed from Babylon through prophetic vision. These enacted prophecies communicated coming judgment when normal preaching might be dismissed.

The command to use human dung as fuel symbolized the severe defilement and degradation awaiting Jerusalem's inhabitants during the horrific siege. Historical records and Lamentations confirm that conditions became so desperate that cannibalism occurred (Lamentations 4:10). Ezekiel's protest highlights the shock of such defilement to a people whose entire identity centered on being God's holy, set-apart nation.

For exiles in Babylon, maintaining dietary laws became a crucial mark of covenant faithfulness when Temple worship was impossible. Daniel and his friends made similar stands (Daniel 1:8-16). Ezekiel's concern for purity, even in symbolic actions, reinforced this commitment. Yet the prophetic message remained clear: judgment was coming because the nation had already defiled themselves with idolatry far worse than ceremonial uncleanness (Ezekiel 8:1-18).

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How do you respond when God's commands seem to conflict with your understanding of purity or holiness?
2. What does Ezekiel's lifelong commitment to God's law teach us about consistent, habitual obedience from youth?
3. How should believers balance external religious practices with internal heart purity?
4. What does God's willingness to modify the symbolic act without changing the message reveal about His character?
5. How does Christ's teaching that defilement comes from the heart, not external sources, relate to this passage?

Interlinear Text

Then said	I Ah	Lord	GOD	H2009	behold my soul	H3808
H559	H162	H136	H3069		H5315	
hath not been polluted	of that which dieth of itself	or is torn in pieces				H3808
H2930	H5038	H2966				
up even till now have I not eaten	for from my youth					
H398	H5271					
neither came	into my mouth	flesh	there abominable			
H935	H6310	H1320	H6292			

Additional Cross-References

Acts 10:14 (References Lord): But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean.

Ezekiel 20:49 (References God): Then said I, Ah Lord GOD! they say of me, Doth he not speak parables?

Ezekiel 9:8 (References God): And it came to pass, while they were slaying them, and I was left, that I fell upon my face, and cried, and said, Ah Lord GOD! wilt thou destroy all the residue of Israel in thy pouring out of thy fury upon Jerusalem?

Isaiah 65:4 (Parallel theme): Which remain among the graves, and lodge in the monuments, which eat swine's flesh, and broth of abominable things is in their vessels;

Jeremiah 1:6 (References God): Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child.

Deuteronomy 14:3 (Parallel theme): Thou shalt not eat any abominable thing.

Isaiah 66:17 (References Lord): They that sanctify themselves, and purify themselves in the gardens behind one tree in the midst, eating swine's flesh, and the abomination, and the mouse, shall be consumed together, saith the LORD.

Exodus 22:31 (Parallel theme): And ye shall be holy men unto me: neither shall ye eat any flesh that is torn of beasts in the field; ye shall cast it to the dogs.

Leviticus 17:15 (Parallel theme): And every soul that eateth that which died of itself, or that which was torn with beasts, whether it be one of your own country, or a stranger, he shall both wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even: then shall he be clean.