

Ezekiel 4:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And lay siege against it, and build a fort against it, and cast a mount against it; set the camp also against it, and set battering rams against it round about.

Analysis

And lay siege against it, and build a fort against it, and cast a mount against it; set the camp also against it, and set battering rams against it round about. Ezekiel's siege dramatization intensifies with military specifics mirroring ancient warfare tactics. "Lay siege" (natan aleiha matzor, נָתַן עָלֶיהָ מַצּוֹר) means to establish a blockade preventing food, water, and reinforcements. "Build a fort" (banah dayeq, בָּנָה דֵּיֵיק) refers to siege works—towers and platforms from which attackers could shoot arrows and hurl projectiles over defensive walls.

"Cast a mount" (shaphak solelah, שָׁפַךְ סִלְלָה) describes building earthen ramps against city walls, allowing siege engines and troops to reach higher elevations. Archaeological excavations at Lachish revealed a massive Assyrian siege ramp from Sennacherib's campaign (701 BC), confirming this practice's historical reality. "Set battering rams round about" (karim, כָּרִים) refers to mobile wooden structures with metal-tipped beams used to breach walls and gates.

Each military element emphasizes the siege's thoroughness and inevitability. God commands Ezekiel to depict not a brief skirmish but systematic, overwhelming assault. This reflects the seriousness of Judah's sin—minor correction won't suffice; only complete devastation will purge idolatry and restore covenant faithfulness. Theologically, this teaches that unrepentant sin faces comprehensive judgment. God's patience has limits; persistent rebellion eventually exhausts His forbearance (Genesis 15:16; 2 Chronicles 36:15-16).

Historical Context

Babylon's siege warfare was legendary in the ancient Near East. Nebuchadnezzar's armies perfected techniques developed by Assyrian predecessors, combining patient blockade with aggressive assault. Historical records and archaeological evidence confirm Babylonian use of siege towers, ramps, and battering rams in multiple campaigns.

Jerusalem's 586 BC siege lasted approximately 18 months (2 Kings 25:1-3), resulting in catastrophic famine before the walls were breached. Jeremiah's contemporary account describes mothers eating their children due to starvation (Lamentations 4:10). Ezekiel's prophetic dramatization, performed five years before the actual siege, warned the exiles that Jerusalem's suffering would be unprecedented.

The exiles watching Ezekiel's performance likely reacted with skepticism or horror—Jerusalem was God's city, site of His temple. How could it fall? Yet Ezekiel's message was clear: covenant unfaithfulness nullified divine protection. The same God who once fought for Jerusalem against Assyria (2 Kings 19:35) now fought against it through Babylon. This reversed holy war—God as enemy rather than ally—demonstrated the gravity of Israel's apostasy.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does the thoroughness of God's judgment against Jerusalem reveal His hatred of sin?
2. What does this passage teach about the consequences of presuming on God's protection while living in disobedience?

3. How should the reality of divine judgment shape our evangelism and call to repentance?

Interlinear Text

מִצֹּר	עַל יָהּ	וַיִּבֶן יֵת	עַל יָהּ	קִיָּה
And lay	H5921	siege	against it and build	H5921
H5414		H4692	H1129	a fort
				H1785
וַיִּשְׁפֹּךְ	עַל יָהּ	סִלְלָה ה	וַיִּבֶן יֵת	עַל יָהּ
against it and cast	H5921	a mount	And lay	H5921
H8210		H5550	H5414	the camp
				H4264
וַיִּשֶׂם	עַל יָהּ	כָּר יֵם	סָבִיב:	
also against it and set	H5921	battering rams	against it round about	
H7760		H3733	H5439	

Additional Cross-References

Ezekiel 21:22 (Parallel theme): At his right hand was the divination for Jerusalem, to appoint captains, to open the mouth in the slaughter, to lift up the voice with shouting, to appoint battering rams against the gates, to cast a mount, and to build a fort.

Jeremiah 6:6 (Parallel theme): For thus hath the LORD of hosts said, Hew ye down trees, and cast a mount against Jerusalem: this is the city to be visited; she is wholly oppression in the midst of her.